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A N [Benard Picotet]

ANTIDOTE

AGAINST

A Careless Indifferency in Matters
of RELIGION.

Being a

TREATISE

In Opposition to those that believe,
That all Religions are Indifferent,
and that it Imports not what Men
Profess.

Done out of French.

With an INTRODUCTION
by Anthony Horneck, D. D.
*Chaplain in Ordinary to Their
Majesties.*

L O N D O N,

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try, 1694.

AN

ANTIDOTE

AGAINST

THE INFLUENCE OF

RELIGION

By

TREATISE

OF THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON THE MIND AND CONDUCT OF MANKIND, AND THE MEANS OF REMEDYING THE EVILS WHICH IT PRODUCES.

By the Author of the

TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL

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LONDON

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The Introduction.

WHile there is a City of God, and a City of the Devil, a Kingdom of Light, and a Kingdom of Darkness, we must expect, that Truth and Virtue will be opposed by Sin, and Falshood; and the more important any Truth is, the greater opposition it will meet with from, the instruments of Unrighteousness.

He that reads the History of the Church, will find how in every Age, one or other hath started up. to bark against the Light, and even then, when Miracles shined, and Wonders were fresh, and Signs from Heaven accompanied the Doctrine; false Apostles transformed sometimes into Angels of Light, have risen, to undermine the Structure.

There is not an Article of our Faith, but what hath been contradicted, and there is nothing so Sacred, but the Enemy of Mankind, hath found out persons to serve him in the polluting it. Nor must we wonder, to find Truth assaulted, and its Beauty in danger of being sullied. It would not look so Glorious if it were not resisted, and its Brightness doth in a great measure, rise, from the Quiver that rattles against it, from the glittering Spear and the Shield, The Darts thrown against it, shew its worth, and the rage of Enemies discovers its inestimable value; the price

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of the Treasure is enhanced by the practices of Thieves, and that there are those, who attempt the stealing of it, raises an appetite, and greediness in others, to embrace and keep it.

Indeed, Truth like a Tree, runs out into various Branches, some whereof may be better spared, than others, and though, to cut the least Sprig is dangerous, and injurious, yet, as in Human Bodies, a wound in the Arm, is not so pernicious as in the Bowels, and there is a vast difference between an accidental Head-ach, and a Disease that incroaches upon the Vitals; so while the lesser Boughs of Truth are marred, though it may be the cause of just Grief, yet we can exercise that piece of Charity, which beareth all things, but it is enough to put us out of all patience, to see the heart of the Tree level'd at, and the Sap that feeds, and gives it life, in danger of being dried up.

Such is the degeneracy of the Age we live in, that the very Fundamentals of Religion are struck at, and though Modesty was never any quality of the Devil, except it were in order to Deceive, yet his Boldness at this time seems to step out of the common Road, and though Practical Atheism hath been the stratagem, he hath made use of all along, yet, his grand endeavour now, and of late years, is to lead Men into Speculative; And we see it hath so far prevailed with abundance of Men, that they are grown very Indifferent, whether they believe any thing at all, concerning God or Religion.

As there is no error, but what Men pretend to give some reason for, so it's like the Lukewarmness of some, the horrid Debauchery of others, the Divisions

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visions that are among Christians, and the Animosity of one party against another, and I will be bold to mention, the late Revolution too, or rather the misconstruction of it, may be alledged, as causes of this Indifferency. But where Men will not be at the pains of separating the Dross from the Gold, and are loath to distinguish the ill Digestion, from the goodness of the Food, or are for rejecting the use of things, because they are managed ill by persons, who Idolize their Interest, or which is as bad, from the irregularity of Practice, infer a falsity of Doctrine, they must necessarily run into strange Conceits, and make that an Argument of unbelief, which should engage them to a stricter Enquiry.

We may justly look upon't, as a special Act of God's Providence, as Weeds do grow, still to raise up Men to root them up, and to oppose the spreading Infection by suitable Antidotes. This he doth, though few take notice of it, that he may not leave himself without witness, and to render those, who are willingly caught with these deceitful Baits, inexcusable. Indeed it is not every excuse, will take with an All-intelligent Being, and for People to pretend, that they cannot be satisfied in the great Principles of Religion, which are to make them good, and serviceable to God and Man, either because of the different Opinions about them, or because of the ill use, that some make of them, or because it is hard to know the Truth, is a frivolous Plea when we see, they are more inquisitive after things, which make against Religion, then after that, which can be said for it, and wilfully neglect perusing, and considering Books, which assert and vindicate the

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power of it, and greedily swallow the froth of witty Men, spew'd out against its force, and energy. Since Atheism and Indifferency have made those incurfions upon us, which to our Sorrow we behold, many admirable Treatises have come forth to baffle its pretences. But these are very carefully shun'd by the lesser sort, or if any such be put into their hands, they are rejected with a Laugh, and a merry Jest taken with them more, then the most judicious Reasonings.

So find are Men of ruining themselves, and scrape together what trash they can, to fortifie themselves against substantial Goodness. However, God is kind, in affording them helps to free themselves from the Devil's snares, and if those Helps be wilfully rejected, it is soon guessed, at whose door their Destruction will lie.

Truth shall triumph at last, and all the prophane Herd shall find, when it is too late, it may be, they had a God to deal with, that will not be mocked. Since nothing can satisfy them, but experience of God's Justice, they shall find it to their cost, and by intolerable anguish of Mind, be convinc'd of that which they would not be persuaded to believe, by the clearest Reason.

Good Lord! That there should be a necessity of taking pains to persuade Men, that they are not Beasts, and that their Reason, Capacities, and Powers of their Souls, require something more then Eating and Drinking, and Sleeping, and minding their Business, and Pleasures in the World! This hath been so fully demonstrated by Wise and Considerate Men, that one would think, there should be no room left for Subterfuges,

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fuges and Evasions, and as such persons justly have thought, they could not employ their Talents better, than in asserting the strong foundations of Religion, so they deserve Eternal Commendations, for letting the World see, that whatever attempts have been made to ruine it, its pillars, like that of the Earth, are unmoveable, and its Notions so riveted into our Natures, that we must first deny our Being, before we can deny its Principles.

The same I may say of the Author of these Papers, who observing the strange Indifferency, that is abroad in the World, hath endeavour'd to dash that Child against the stones. His Arguments are strong, and weighty, and his Answers to the Cavils and Exceptions of Atheistical Men, short, but pithy, and such as may satisfy Men, who have not totally abandon'd the Dictates of right Reason.

Religion is a thing fitted to our Reason, and the more our Reason is employ'd about it, the more its necessity and Beauty, and Glory will appear. That Men are so Indifferent about it, the principal cause is, because rational Consideration is excluded, and they are guided more by their Sences than their Reason. They are for the most part brought up, and educated into sensuality, and whatever gratifies their Sences, is made the darling Object of their Love, and because Religion lays a restraint upon the sensual Appetite, they are very willing to entertain prejudices against it, and any little exception serves as an Argument against submitting to the Holy Laws of it. The deeper root this sensuality takes, the more Religion is weakened, and thrust out, till in time the common Principles of it are question'd, and

at

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at last, if it may be done with safety, as to the Law of the Land, denied.

It's loath to Vice, that corrupts Mens Understandings, and if we examine and search into the root of all, it will be found that this Indifferency in matters of Religion proceeds from Mens being addicted to some Sin, or other, they are loth to part with; and because the stricter Rules of Religion, are inconsistent with their unbridled Lusts, they think it their Interest to abandon it, or if they retain any thing of it, it is only a shadow, and no more.

There is nothing so bad, but may be colour'd over with specious Arguments, and unthinking Men are soon gravell'd with such kind of Objections, especially, if the byasse be toward evil; for then a very weak Argument will draw, and what it wants in strength, is made up by the power of a vicious Inclination. This gives it weight, and makes that conclusive, which at other times would scarce deserve a moment of serious Consideration.

That I recommend the perusal of this Book, is not so much to gratifie the Book-seller, as to promote the publick Good; The Work is useful, and may help to reform the times, and put a stop to the growth of Licentiousness. The meanest Reader may benefit himself by it, and it will furnish him with Answers to the vulgar Objections of Libertines. The smallness of its Bulk will be an encouragement to look it over, and the solid Reasons made use of, will by the Blessing of God convince him, there is something more in Religion, then Fancy.

A. HORNECK.

The P R E F A C E

THere are so many People now a days, who believe, that all Religions are Indifferent, that 'tis not a thing to be wonder'd at, If something in Opposition to such a growing Mischief should be written upon this subject. But we cannot forbear to observe, that there are five sort of Persons who uphold this Indifferency.

1. There are some who do it purely out of Affection to Libertinism, and because that Naturally they love to be Independent. They will not acknowledge any Master over 'em, to the end they may be able to say, believe, and do whatever they please, without fearing to give an Account hereafter.

2. Others there are who do it out of Vanity ; to the end they may be thought to be Wits of the First Order, that disdain to herd with those that follow the Common Opinion. And these People at first are but weakly convinc'd of what they say ; but by publishing continually their Singular Sentiments, they come to be fully persuaded of the Truth of 'em at last, and haughtily set themselves in the Rank of the People disabus'd, looking with pity upon the Rest of the World, that are scar'd with the thoughts of Futurity.

3. There

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3. There are some who do it out of Sloth; because they will not give themselves the Trouble of Examining Religions. So that they suffer themselves to be easily surprized by the Reasons of our Pretended *Soaring Wits*; finding themselves by that means delivered from the care they ought to take in a more diligent and laborious Scrutiny.

4. Others uphold this Opinion because they find it very convenient for preserving their Estates and their Honours, which they prefer before Truth, and love beyond all things in the World.

5. There are some who do it, not because they believe all Religions to be Indifferent, but because they have peculiar Sentiments of Religion, which they dare not sow abroad until they have Insinuated, that 'tis a very Indifferent thing what Men believe, that they may not offend 'em with their Opinions.

That which is most to be Lamented is this, that these Wild Opinions very much corrupt and taint Others, which they do with so much the less trouble, 1. Because that naturally we love Liberty, and we would willingly be Independent. 2. Because we are pufft up with Pride, and that there is nothing that pleases us so much as to be distinguish'd from others. 3. Because labour dislikes us, and for that we love not that which puts us to any hardship. 4. Because we have too great an Affection for our Wealth, and for that it is a great Trouble to us to quit the Pleasures and Comfortable Conveniences of this Life. There is nothing left unessay'd to surprize those Pious Souls that seek to work out their Salvation.

There

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There is great care taken to make 'em understand that they ought to make Christian Morality their Study, and that there is nothing but Morality to be preach'd up. They tell us, that we have need to be corrected and reprov'd; that the Greatest part of Men sufficiently knows the Will of God, but that few practise it. This is agreed; but the Chief Aim of those who thus discourse, is artificially to insinuate, that there is no necessity of tormenting our selves, about what we ought to believe, only that we ought to live well. And thus they prepare People insensibly to believe, that all Religions are Indifferent. However, we must acknowledge, that they who are of this Opinion are not all alike corrupt; but yet they are sufficiently erroneous for us to deplore the Misfortune of this Age. 'Tis for the Faithful to fortifie themselves against those Delusions, that we have underraken this Treatise, and with an endeavour to recall those that are gone astray. This is the only aim that we have propos'd to our selves, and not to get the Reputation of an Author. We conjure all those that read this Little Manual, to strive with themselves and to read it with Application. We beseech 'em not to read it with a Libertine's Humour that scoffs at every thing, but with a desire to search out the Truth, and with the same diligence that they study Human Sciences. Let 'em consider,

1. That the dispute is not here about a Thing of little Importance, since it concerns their being Eternally Miserable if they are deceiv'd; as we shall make appear in this Treatise.

2. Let

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2. Let 'em not reject what we shall say, under pretence of meeting with Reasons that are not fully convincing. For tho' there were but one good Reason in a Chapter, 'twere enough to oblige 'em to return from their Wandrings.

3. That they ought not to despise the Arguments, under pretence that they have heard 'em several times; but let 'em carefully examine 'em, and lay aside their Prejudices.

4. Lastly, That it is not enough to find some petty fault, to reject the Reasons which are produced; for that there is nothing so easie as to oppose some little Sophisms to good Arguments. But let 'em consult their own Consciencs: I most Heartily beseech Almighty God to give a Blessing to my weak Endeavours.

ERRATA.

Page 18. Line 18. for *Sees*, read *Seems*. page 30. l. 32. dele *All*. p. 31. l. ult. for *in*, r. *with*. p. 34. l. 12. for *no Confusion*, r. *nothing but Confusion*. pa. 42. l. 33. for *King* r. *Kind*. pa. 46. l. 12. for *the first him*, r. *us*. pa. 56. l. 31. for *Proportions*, r. *Propositions*. pa. 66. l. 19. for *subscribe*, r. *prescribe*. pa. 69. l. 12. for *wearing* r. *drawing*. for *upon* r. *from*. pa. 71. l. 2. for *of her*, r. *other*. pa. 74. l. 6. for *has*, r. *is*. pa. 77. l. 8. Insert *Nor*. pa. 79. l. 18. for *Animosity*, r. *Animality*. pa. 89. Chap. XV. for *they make*, r. *they may make*. pa. 90. l. 8. after *strong*, insert *they*. pa. 93. l. 4. for *long*, r. *come*. pa. 94. l. 26. for *the things of Consistence*, r. *Remorse of Conscience*. pa. 113. o. l. 32. for *assert*, r. *asserts*.

(1)

A
TREATISE

*Against those that believe that all
Religions are Indifferent.*

CHAP. I

*Wherein, after we have suppos'd that there is a
God, we shew that God is most perfect. That he
is the Author of all the Good which is in the Crea-
tures, and that we ought to Fear and Honour
him.*

THE Being of a God is a Truth so
Evident, that no Man can deny it
without combating his own Rea-
son. There's no necessity of strain-
ing our Endeavours to believe it;
for that Man must put a Violence upon himself,
who dares to contradict it. For proof of it, there
is no need of rommaging for Metaphysical, high-
flown, far-fetch'd Arguments, scarcely within the
B Reach

Reach of most Men's Understanding. The Consideration of this same spacious Universe expos'd to our Eyes, and all the Creatures we behold within it, together with the Correspondency, the Symmetry and Relation of the several Innumerable parts to the Whole, is sufficient to convince all people that will listen to their Reason. For as for those that are not struck with the sensible Marks which the Author of Nature has imprinted on his Works, they will never submit to the Force of Dispute. The most E-

* *Cicero l. 2. loquent, and most Learned of the*
Nat. Deo- * Romans was so over-rul'd by this
rum. particular Proof, that he makes no

scruple to maintain, after a great Philosopher, that if Men should, of a sudden, start up from under the Earth, where they had remain'd in Darkness from the Time of their Birth, and all at once behold the Land, the Sea, and Heavens; the Beauty, the vast Body and wonderful Effects of the Sun, they would not fail to acknowledge a Deity, and to confess that the whole which they contemplated was the Workmanship of a God.

In short, either we must believe that the Matter is Eternal, or that the World is the Effect of Chance; or else we must acknowledge that there is an All-powerful Being which made both the one and the other. Now it cannot be said, that a Dead and Insensible Mass, such as was the Matter, is an Eternal Being, and without any Beginning, because it would be the Greatest of all Absurdities, to ascribe to the Vilest of all Beings, the Chiefest of all Perfections, which is to exist
of

of it self. Besides, in regard that Motion is not Essential to the Matter, tho' it should be suppos'd to be Eternal, we should be still putting the Question, when it began to have Motion? Who it was that gave it the first Impressions? Who it was that shap'd it into so many various Figures? Who made this Motion so just and Regular; and who it was that produc'd such an Infinite variety of Creatures out of one and the same Matter? So that when all is done, we must come to one Sovereign Being, which we call GOD.

It cannot be said, that this Vast Universe is the Effect of Chance, or that it was the Accidental Meeting of Certain little Bodies which produc'd it. The Pagan Philosopher who maintain'd this Opinion, that Nature muster'd together all the Atomes of her Wisdom to compose it, seems to me no less Extravagant in this particular then He, who beholding several Pictures, wherein were to be observ'd all the Rules of Exact and Elaborate Painting, and a great Number of Figures curiously drawn, should say, that it was the Workmanship of Chance, or that the Colours mix'd so Artfully together of themselves.

What Man of sound Judgment can be so vain to think, that it was *Chance* that made the *Whole* which we Contemplate, the Heavens, the Earth, the Sun, the Stars, the Plants and Animals; That it was *Chance*, that in the Wombs of our Mothers form'd a Piece of Workmanship so perfect as that of our Bodies, whose Structure, Figure, Organs, Members, their wonderful Symmetry and just Proportion, is still the Admiration of

Human Wisdom : that it was *Chance*, which produc'd our Souls; that Soul which thinks, which raises it self above our Sences, and which corrects and governs 'em ; that searches after, invents and finds out, those things that seem'd impossible for Human Reach. Lastly, that it was *Chance*, which united this Soul so perfectly with the Body, that such and such motions of the Body stir up Thoughts in the Soul, and such and such Thoughts of the Soul, which produce variety of Motions in the Body. Certainly we must no longer pretend to make use of our Reason, if we once deny these to be the Works of an All-powerful, most Wise, All-understanding, and most Perfect Being.

So that I shall not undertake to refute those, who in defence of *Epicurus*, adventure to bring some Examples of what *Chance* is able to perform. For there is so little proportion between what they alledge, and the Creatures which we speak of, that 'tis a wonder that People who pretend to Wit, should employ it in such feeble Proofs. I might as easily prove, that because it so happens, that three or four Letters may be so thrown together by chance, as to form a word ; a Man might as easily make a Poem as accomplish'd as *Virgil's Aeneads*. Nay, tho I should grant that *Chance* might form some one of those Creatures which we every day admire ; Shall we from thence infer, that it was *Chance* that so well order'd all things, as to prescribe to every thing the particular Use that is assign'd it, or that so well joyn'd and plac'd together all things, as to be useful the one to the other, the Heavens to
the

the Earth, the Earth to the Plants, the Plants to the Creatures ? Tho' *Chance* might frame an Eye, how is it possible for us to conceive, that *Chance* also made the Light, without which, the Eyes would signifie nothing ?

Seeing then that matter is not Eternal, and that the World was not made of it self, either by *Chance* or the concurrence of Atoms, according to *Epicurus*, of necessity we must conclude, that there is an Almighty Being that made it, since nothing but an infinite Power could draw the first Matter out of Nothing, or give it so lovely a Form. And this All Powerful Being is that which we call God.

It may be objected perhaps, that Nature is the cause of all those Great Effects ; 'tis she, say they, that causes the Plants to sprout and shoot forth, that gives Life to Men, &c. But all this while, what do they mean by Nature ? Is it an Intelligent Cause ? or a Blind and Stupid Cause ? If it be a Stupid Cause, how comes it to act with so much Wisdom ? If it be an Intelligent Cause, endu'd with infinite Wisdom, is not this the calling of Nature that which we call God ? Or if they mean by Nature, that Order which appears in the Production, Generation and Preservation of every Creature ; then who establish'd that Order, but that sovereign Being which we all adore ?

'Tis then most certain that there is a God ; and we have no design to enlarge any farther upon the proof of it. All Sciences lead us to this Truth, and all Nations in all Ages have acknowledg'd it, except some certain barbarous People among

whom Reason was almost extinguish'd ; and in some, Travellers have not observ'd any sentiments of a Deity, because they have not been so strictly nice to inform themselves. But Man, who is naturally proud and high-minded, has rather chosen to worship Wood and Stones, Beasts and Plants, Crocodils and Trees, Rats and Onions, then to be without a God, and adore nothing at all. However, we must confess, that there were formerly, and still are now-a-days, some People, who making an ill use of their Reason, attacque this Principle and drawing off their Wit from every thing that might be able to prove a Deity, meerly to apply themselves to whatever may increase and harden 'em in their Doubts, persuade themselves at length, that there is no God. But besides, that they who arrive to this degree of Impiety, are not very numerous; and that there is great reason to question, whether there be any real Atheists ; I speak of Atheists in Wit, if I may presume so to express myself, and not of Atheists in Heart, there are very few who carry their incredulity to their Grave. The greatest part confess in despite of their own Teeth, the Deity, whose Enemy they declare themselves to be ; nor can they forbear imploring his Aid in their most pressing occasions, and upon unexpected Accidents ; necessity and their Conscience forcing 'em to acknowledge, what before out of malice and disdain of Heav'n they deny'd. Therefore the Impiety of some Libertines, who endeavour to prove there is no God, because they could wish there were not,
ought

ought not be any inducement for us to question a Verity so universally acknowledg'd.

But if it behoves our Reason as Haughty as it is, to confess a Deity, and that Man has a Master, under whose Empire it becomes him to humble himself; it becomes him also to acknowledge that this Sovereign Power possesses all Perfections, and those in such a degree, as that there can be none conceiv'd to be greater or more accomplish'd.

This is the *Idea* which we naturally have of God; nor can we have any other, if we follow the Illuminations of Right Reason. Nothing is to be conceiv'd to be better, or more perfect than the Deity; and this is agreed on by all the World. For if he wanted some Perfection, or if he did not possess it in a Supream degree, then would something be conceiv'd more perfect than He. Therefore it must be own'd, that whoever speaks of a God, speaks of the most perfect of all Beings, that exist or can exist.

I will not undertake to describe all these Perfections; they are Infinite: nor can the Angels themselves, those Blessed Existencies, who are always before this Sovereign Being, but very imperfectly instruct us who he is. 'Tis sufficient that we observe that no Man can have an *Idea* of a most perfect Being, without conceiving at the same time, that he subsists of himself, and necessarily exists; that he is an Eternal Being, and without any Beginning: that he is an Independent Being, but upon whom all things depend: an All-seeing, All-knowing, All-foreseeing, and Omnipotent Existence. A Being Sovereignly

good, most Just, most Wise, and most Happy. Thus it behoves us to conceive all these Perfections in the Being which we adore, and who is our God.

This is a Truth beyond all Contest: But it is also no less certain, that this most perfect Being, who created the Matter, the World, and whatever we behold contain'd within it, is the Author of all the Good which is in the Creatures. All the Creatures can expect no Good, but from him who gave 'em their Being, and by whom they subsist. There is none but He who perfectly knows what is convenient for 'em, because he knows all things; and He alone can only bestow it upon 'em, by reason of his Omnipotency. The Pagans have acknowledg'd this, in the midst of their Ignorance, as it would be easie for me to prove out of the Works of their most celebrated Authors. They all agreed, that their Lives and their good Fortune (for that was their manner of speaking) depended upon God. *This is the Opinion of all Men*, said Cicero: for I mind not what Ajax says in *Sophocles*, and another no less impious in *Eschylus*, who upheld, that none but Fools and faint-hearted People implor'd the Omnipotency of the Gods. But there have been others who have added; that Wisdom and Virtue depended upon this Supream Being; that the Beginning and End, or the success of all Things depended upon him: And the Emperor *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus* has those sentiments upon this Subject, as put to shame several false Christians. For he says, that there is an Effectual Virtue in God, which acts in us, and operates all our good Actions,

Actions, and all our good desires, and which removes from us all Opportunities and Occasions of falling into Sin.

From all these Truths I draw this Consequence, which naturally flows from these Principles; That it is absolutely our Duty to Honour this Infinite Being, to endeavour from day to day to understand him more perfectly, continually to admire his Virtues, to love and fear him, to make it our whole imployment to please him, and to bear our selves, that whatever we are, whatever we do, whatever we have, may be all order'd to his Glory. For let us but grant that there is a God in the World, that this God is most perfect, that he is Supreamly Good, and that he is the Author of all the Good which we enjoy, and of all that we can hope for; certainly we cannot then forbear to admire his Perfections, but must believe our selves engag'd and bound to love him. Let us but acknowledge that this God is Omnipotent, and that it is in his Power to reduce all the Creatures he has made, into their Primitive Dust, and that he is able Eternally to punish those who violate his Laws; we must be then assuredly convinc'd, that he is to be fear'd, and we ought not to provoke his Wrath. Let us be perswaded that this God is most Just, that he loves Justice, and that whatever he exacts from us, tends only to make us happy, and is nothing but what is most conformable to our real Interests, it creates a Pleasure in us to obey him, and be submissive to his Will. Let us once be sensible, that this God is both able and willing to redress all our Complaints, to deliver us

out of all our Miseries, and that all things depend upon his Conduct and Direction, it presently persuades us to a sole Reliance upon him. Lastly, Let us believe that this God is most Wise, that he Created Man for those ends which are most worthy of him, and we can never question, but that Men are bound to pursue those ends to which they are appointed, in making a right use of that Reason which they have receiv'd, and applying it to the Glory of him who gave it 'em. Now all these Acts of Veneration, Respect, Fear, Submission, Adoration, Admiration, Confidence, Obedience, and Love, are comprehended in the single Word *Religion*. So that the Idea and Knowledge of God, imports the Necessity of a Religion.

CH A P. II.

That Religion is not the Invention of Politicians.

THere are some People who maintain that Religion, as also the Opinion of a God, is the Invention of certain Politicians, who, as they suppose, made the People believe there is a Deity, on purpose to retain 'em in Submission and Obedience; that there is a certain Worship to be paid him; and that this Deity severely punishes the Treacherous, the Seditious, and Rebels.

But it will be no difficult thing to make out the absurdity of this Opinion to those who have any Love and Veneration for Truth. For to prove, that

that there were any Legislators, or any cunning Politicians, who made the People believe that there is a God, and that there is a Necessity of a Religion, they must make it appear to us,

1. That before the Birth of those Legislators, and Founders of States and Dominions, the People were ignorant that there was a God, and that they never paid him any Worship.

2. That those Legislators never had themselves any Fear or Sentiment of a Deity.

Now this is that which they will never be able to prove; neither do I believe they will ever presume to undertake it. Let 'em instance any time wherein People liv'd without acknowledging a God. Let 'em tell us the Names of those first Men, that were the Authors of that Opinion, that there is a Deity; at least let 'em instruct us when those Ages were, that it first began to be receiv'd in the World. 'Tis true, it cannot be deny'd but that there were some Politicians who have made advantagious use of this First Notion, That there is a Being who is far Superiour to all those which we behold, or of which we have any knowledge, as they have no less successfully made use of the Vanity of the People, and that love which they naturally have for Liberty, their Lives, their Children, or whatever else belongs to 'em: and of this Number were *Jeroboam, Minos, Lycurgus, Solon, Numa, Mahomet*, and some others famous in History. I must acknowledge likewise that these Legislators very much confirm'd the People in their Natural Propensity to a Religion; in regard they had too much Wit to be Ignorant, that without Religion Society would
dece

degenerate into Common Robbery, since every one would then do what he pleas'd; the most Crafty would be the most Wise, and the most Powerful and strongest would be always Masters. 'Tis most certain also, that these Law-givers have made the People believe, that the Deity would be Worship'd in such or such a Manner; and that they have introduc'd such Ceremonies as they thought most proper for their Designs. Nor will I scruple to agree, that there have been several who derided the Deities which the People ador'd, and who have made 'em pay their Adoration to what Deities they pleas'd. The thing was easie to be done in such Places, where the People were ignorant of the True God whom they were to serve. But I aver, that never any of those Legislators undertook to prove the Existence of a God. They took that Truth for granted, and built upon that Foundation. But they never prov'd it; and I am assuredly convinc'd, that if they had not met with it already engrav'd in the Hearts and Minds of all Men, they would never have succeeded in their Great Designs.

Is it a thing to be believ'd, that two, or three Men could deceive the whole World, or that for the Establishment of their Authority, they could ever impose their own Inventions upon People as Quick-sighted as themselves, that Laugh'd at Popular Errors, such as *Socrates*, *Plato*, or *Cicero*? Is it probable, that they could have seduc'd and mislead People who were not subjected to their Dominion; nay, People that commanded over others, to believe the Flatteries of those who would needs persuade 'em, that their Law-givers

givers and Princes were Gods, and whom indeed they Worship'd as so many Deities? Is it possible an Opinion, Originally no more then the Invention of some Ambitious Persons, should be so deeply rooted in the minds of all Men, that they could never Eradicate it again, whatever efforts they made, when we find every day that Men renounce so many Vulgar Errors, tho' suck'd in with their Infant Milk?

Lastly, Is there any Appearance or Likelihood, that after so many Ages, Men should never be Convinc'd of an Opinion that disquiets and troubles their Consciences with so many Terrors and Convulsions?

C H A P. III.

Of the Indifference of Religions.

TIs clear then, that all Men have a Natural Inclination to Religion, in regard that All have an Opinion that there is a God. Now if they all understood this Deity after one and the same Manner, there would be but one Religion in the World. But their Idea's are so various, that there are almost as many Religions as there are People. From whence the Question has risen, Whether Men are equally acceptable to God, whatever Religion they profess? And whether they may be allow'd, as an Indifferent Thing, to be of any Religion? There are some People, and of these too many, God knows, who believe that all Religions are Indifferent: that
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the Chief Religion, is to be Obedient to the Magistrates that Govern us; that God is in truth the Center to which all our Devotion ought to tend, but that it is of little Importance which way Men arrive at that Center, provided they get thither; and that there are several ways to be happy. *Uno itinere non posse perveniri ad tam grande Secretum*, according to *Symmachus*. That we ought to be of the Religion of the People among whom we live, and not to tie our selves to any one particular manner of serving God, but to be initiated into all sorts of Religions, *Esse totius Mundi Sacrorum Antistitem*, as a Pagan said. They who have given us Relations of the Belief of the *Siamois*, or People of *Siam*, report, that they believe, That God does not preserve the World, but only for the sake of that Diversitment and pleasure which he takes in the Variety of Languages, Creatures, Habits, and Religions; that this same Medley produces the same Effect as the Diversity of Flowers in a Garden, the difference of Meats at a Banquet, or the Distinction of Offices in a Princes Palace; for that in like manner God delights himself with inspiring into Mortals several manners of Adoring and Serving him; and that we ought to believe 'em all to be good, since they have all the same Object, and bring Man home to his last End. 'Tis also said, That the King of *Siam* made Answer to the Person who propos'd to him, in the Name of an Ambassador from a Great Prince, his turning Christian, *That he wonder'd, the Prince should so much trouble himself in a business relating to God, for which it did not appear that God did any way concern*

concern himself, as having left it wholly to our Discretion. For, added he, the True God, who Created Heav'n and Earth and all the Creatures therein contain'd, and who has given 'em Natures and Inclinations so different, had he so pleas'd, at the same time, that he gave Men Bodies and Souls alike, could have infus'd into 'em the same sentiments of the Religion which they were to profess, and have United all Nations under one Law. But, continued he, 'tis obvious that Providence permits diversity of Sects and Opinions, because that God takes as much delight to be ador'd with different Forms of Worship and Ceremonies, as to be glorifi'd by the Prodigious Variety of Creatures, whose sundry Beauties publish his Infinite Power.

Now in regard, there are too too many among those who call themselves Christians, who with Banners display'd, appear in defence of this Opinion, concerning the Indifferency of Religion, Our design is to Combat 'em in the following Chapters. But first of all it behoves us to observe, that they who are of this Opinion, do not all uphold it after one and the same manner. There are some who deny Providence; others who will not have it to be concern'd in Matters of Religion. There are some who assert the Mortality of our Soul: Others aver, that to speak properly, there is no such thing as True or False, Just or Unjust; but that every thing depends upon the Will of Man. There are some who believe, that Truth lies still in Darkness, and that God has not reveal'd it; Others, that he has reveal'd it, but so obscurely, that there is no Heresie which may not be prov'd by the Word

Word of God. Others maintain that Peace is to be preferr'd before Truth ; and altogether cry up the great Good which would redound to the World from the Opinion of Indifferency in Religion. Were but this Opinion every where receiv'd, they say, there would be no more Wars about Religion, nor any more Contentions about Mysteries of Faith. All Men would live together in perfect Unity, and this Lower World would be a Little Heaven. They extol the first Author of this Opinion as one that never can be too Highly applauded, and erect Monuments and Statues to honour his Memory. All Men, they Cry, ought to give God continual Thanks for sending such a Man into the World, and at the same time are strangely troubl'd because he was not Immortal. Let us now see whether this Opinion merits so many Elogies, or rather, whether it deserve not publick Execration. And to the end, that none may have reason to complain, let us take all our *Indifferents* (for I beg the favour that I may have leave to call 'em so) one after another, and let us impartially examine what they hold forth.

C H A P. IV.

Against those who deny a Providence.

I Shall begin with those, who, not daring to maintain that there is no God, yet presume to deny his Providence, and assent with *Epicurus*, that the Supream Deity never concerns himself with what is acted upon Earth: That 'tis a thing beneath the Grandeur of a Sovereign Being, to take cognizance of the Petty Affairs of Mortals here below ; and so 'tis very indifferent to Him of what Religion they are.

True it is, that altho' the Love which it be-
hoves us to have for Truth, should always oblige
us to tye our selves up to the Belief of that Opin-
ion which is most conformable to our receiv'd
Idea's of God ; nevertheless it must be acknow-
ledg'd, that if there were no Providence, we
might conclude it needless for Man to torment
himself about Religion ; and deem it lawful
enough to make choice of that which best agrees
with our Interests, or with the Society with
which we converse. But 'tis no difficult thing
to refute this Opinion, which, with as good Rea-
son might be call'd, *The Sponge of all Religions*,
as a Persian Author once said the same thing of
the *Fatality of the Stoicks*. Nor shall I make use
of any more then two or three Arguments to
overthrow it, without alledging any passages out
of Scripture, because I dispute with People that
will not acknowledge it to be Divinely inspir'd.

First,

First, it must be acknowledg'd, that they who deny a Providence, never seriously consider'd what God is. The *Idea* which we naturally have of God, instructs us, that he is the most perfect of all Beings that exist, or may exist, as already has been said. Now can we believe, that a God, who should neglect his own Works, and should shut himself up in Heaven, without taking any care of what he has created, can be a perfect Being, seeing that among Men themselves, those persons have been always look'd upon with the Highest contempt who neglect their own Affairs. Fathers, for example, who never mind their own Children, and those slothful Princes, who like *Sardanapalus*, abandon the care of their Dominions, and leave their Subjects at liberty to do whatever seems good in their own Eyes. How can such a sluggish Remissness, a Negligence so unbecoming an imperfect Creature, be thought to beseeem the most perfect of all Beings. At least it cannot be deny'd, but that if God takes no care of his Creatures, there must be a Being more perfect than he. But this is that which cannot be said of a God. *Either we must deny (says Cicero, l. Natur. Deor.) that there are Gods, or we must confess, that they act something Great and Noble: Now there is nothing Greater or more Noble than the Conduct of the World. Were it otherwise, we should be forc'd to say, that there is something Better and more Perfect than the Deity.*

Besides, it is not to be imagin'd, that a most Wise Being has created so many Things which we admire, without proposing to himself some End or other. If he have made all these Things

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to some End, can we believe that he takes no care to see whether he have attain'd his End or no, and whether his Creatures do what they ought to do. I know very well what *Epicurus* said, That it would be a defect in the Felicity of God, should he be troubl'd with the management of the World: But he was grossly mistaken, as having a False *Idea* of Felicity. For true Beatitude consists not in doing nothing, but in doing things both Great and Noble. A Being that is not perfect, cannot be happy in a high degree, more especially, if you speak of a Being Supremely Wise. Now it cannot be imagin'd, that a Being, who neglects the looking after what he has taken pleasure to create, can be a perfect Being. Therefore there might be some ground for *Epicurus's* Argument, if God might be thought to tire himself with Governing the World. But how can he be weary who does all things by the only Act of his Will, wherein his Almighty Hand, that ne'r was tir'd in building the vast Structure, where all Beings are enclos'd, has not the least share of Pains or Trouble.

But if they who deny Providence, never consider what God is, neither did they ever consider the nature of the Creatures. Certain it is, that as they were created out of nothing, they would infallibly return to nothing again, if the same hand that form'd 'em, did not support and preserve 'em; for because they Exist at this Instant, it does not follow that they shall Exist the next moment. 'Tis requisite then, that he who preserv'd 'em the first moment, should preserve 'em still; and this is so much the more necessary
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for him to do, because there are a thousand Accidents that might every hour destroy 'em, were there not a Supreme Being that preserves 'em. It is not the same thing with them, as with God, whose Essence at the same time implies Existency: for we may think of the Being of Creatures, yet not suppose that they Exist. Now if it be true, that the Creatures cannot subsist without being sustain'd by the same Hand that made 'em, we must of necessity conclude from their subsisting, that there is a Providence.

We must be farther confirm'd in this Opinion; if we consider the wonderful Order which is observ'd in all parts of the Universe, that never alters, but has subsisted for so many Ages in the midst of so many Changes and Revolutions: The Harmony and Concord of so many Creatures of different Natures; the Regular Motions of those Great Bodies, that roule Majestically over our Heads: their Changes so constant, their Conjunctions so just, their Revolutions so well order'd, together with a thousand things which are our continual wonder, yet, which we can never admire enough. For it is impossible to revolve this Order in our Minds, without acknowledging a Providence, unless we design'd to be as extravagant as He, who, observing a State well Govern'd, a Family well manag'd, or an Army under good Conduct and Discipline, should deny that State or Kingdom to be Govern'd by any Magistracy, that the Family had any body to look after it, or that the Army had any General or Chieftain to Command it.

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They who deny a Providence extol themselves in this Particular, very much, and make some Objections. If it were true, say they, that all things were well regulated, we should believe that God concern'd himself with what is acted here below ; but we observe so many disorders in the World, that we cannot persuade our selves that a Being altogether Wise and Omnipotent should govern the Universe. Nay, 'twould be much better, add they, to affirm, that he takes no heed of what happens upon Earth, then to assert that he beholds and suffers so much Confusion. Whence comes it to pass that Thunder rattles in the Desarts, that Hail and Thunderbolts fall upon Rocks, and that it Rains upon the Sea ? To what purpose serve Flies, Worms, and other Insects ? Whence comes it to pass, that Mountains Vomit forth Fire and Ashes ? Wherefore are we pester'd with Monsters and Serpents ? Were there a Providence, would it not hinder those Inundations, those Earthquakes that overturn and swallow-up whole Cities ; those Pestilences that lay waste whole Kingdoms, and those Extraordinary Accidents that seem to menace the Universe with utter Ruin ? Or would that Providence permit the Oppression of Virtue, and the Triumphs of Vice and Impiety ?

But first I would fain know of those who make these Objections, whether they are well assur'd that what they call Disorder, be really Disorder, and what they say is badly Manag'd be truly the defect of Government ? Did it never so fall out that they deceiv'd themselves, and have they not frequently blam'd the Conduct of Princes, while
they

they were ignorant of the Reasons, but admir'd it afterwards when they understood the Grounds of their Proceedings. What a Rashness is it in Mortal Men, whose Understandings are confin'd within such Narrow Bounds, to determine so positively of what they know not in the least, and to believe there is Disorder in all things, of which they cannot reach the Causes? The Impiety of those People to me seems no less Arrogant than that of the K. of *Castille*, who boasted that if God had call'd him to his Council, when he fram'd the World, he could have given him better Advice. We know no more, says one of the most Celebrated Writers of this Age, the Designs of God in the Government of his Creatures, than an Infant, who having been bred up in a Desert, and all of a sudden brought into some great and Populous City, could be able to understand all the Changes that would happen, without Intermision, before his Eyes. He would many times blame what was by no means to be censur'd, because he could not understand the Reason of those Alterations.

The Cause why they so badly argue proceeds from this, that they consider those things which appear to them so ill manag'd, distjunctively from the other Works of God, and for that they do not reflect with sufficient Attention upon the Correspondency between those things, and others which they know. Wherein they are no less ridiculous than they, who content themselves with only seeing some Scenes of a Dramatic Poem, but never examine the Coherence and Unfolding, or rather Winding up of the Whole; or they
who

who in Pictures only fix their Eyes upon the Shadows; or else like those, who in a piece of Tapistry work, look only upon the loose Bordering, which for the most part presents the Sight with only monstrous and imperfect Figures.

In the Second place, I could wish, that they who find so many disorders, and so much confusion upon the Earth, would tell me, Whether they meet with nothing that is rightly order'd? and, Whether they never observ'd any characters of Wisdom in the Conduct of the World? They would not presume to aver it. Let 'em then tell me, by what means all those things which appear to Them to be in decent Order, come to be so wisely manag'd? Certainly they must, at least in that respect, acknowledge that there is a Providence; and as to other Things, they ought to have as much Equity, as a Man of good Sense, when he judges of a Book, that Treats of various Subjects, and which is written in several Languages, of which he understands but one part. If that which he understands pleases him, he imagines to himself, that what he understands not will be no less satisfactory to him, could he but dive into the sense of it. God would not conceal from Men, all the Ends for which he made all things: But some he has not unveil'd, on purpose to exercise and humble their Reason, and that they might adore the Impenetrable depths of his Wisdom. We ought to extol him, says *St. Austin*, as well for what we know to be wonderful in his Works, as for what we cannot penetrate. For that our Life
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being of so short continuance, and we our selves confin'd within so small a part of Time, and of the Universe; 'tis impossible that we should comprehend the Order and Designs of that Eternal Wisdom, that views the vast immensity of Time with one single Glance, and with linking together that infinite variety of the Events of this Life, like to many Rings clasp'd one within another, forms that long Chain of his Providence, that shall extend it self to the farthest succession of all Ages.

After these General Remarks, let us enter into the examination of these disorders which they speak of. They wonder, in the first place, why Thunder rattles in uninhabited Desarts, that Hail falls upon Rocks; and why Lightning levels with the Ground high and large Trees: not minding that these are but the Consequences of the Laws which God has establish'd. I am as much to seek wherefore they do not likewise complain that the Sun shines upon, and warms those Desarts, because the Heat of the Sun exhales the Vapours and Exhalations which thick'n into those Clouds that generate both Tempests and Lightning. They wonder why the Rain which serves to fertilize the Earth, falls not more regularly upon only Lands Manur'd, and not upon Highways; or upon the Sea, which have no need of it. But do they think that Rain has no other Effects, then only to render the Earth fruitful. Do they not know, that the Highways would crack and gape through Drouth, were they not moisten'd by the Rain? And that it is a great Refreshment to those that Travel in
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hot Countries. Should it only Rain upon sown Lands, says that famous Author already cited. whence should proceed the Springs that are so necessary to quench our own, and the Thirst of all Creatures ; and how should the Rivers retain that abundance of water which renders 'em Navigable ? It Rains upon the Sea : Who says that Rain is there unprofitable to temper the saltness of it, and to make it more wholesome for the nourishment of the Fish.

They wonder that there should be Mountains cover'd with Snow, and others that vomit forth Fire, that there should be Desarts and steep Rocks. Not considering that their variety of Objects it is, which makes the Beauty of the Universe, and that God manifests his Wisdom more in that Diversity, then in a Uniformity, tho' grateful to the sight, yet still the same.

They wonder why there should be Insects, as if we could sufficiently admire the Wisdom of God in those little Animals ; for example, in the little Republick of the Bees, which employ'd the Brains of an Ancient Philosopher, for above Threescore years ; and which at this day finds work enough for those that dive into the secrets of Nature. Should we as diligently enquire into the Use of these little Insects, as into the Benefit of Simples, we should doubtless discover very profitable Secrets, I will not except the very Flies and Gnats, which are said to be useful to purifie the Air, in places where there are the greatest number of 'em, and where they are most troublesome, and give the greatest annoyance.

They admire there should be poisonous Serpents, and other venomous Beasts, but never con-

sider that there are many excellent Remedies extracted out of Serpents; and that Sovereign Antidotes are frequently made of compounded Poisons that serve to ease the Pains of Men; and that in general, all these things which he believes to be either superfluous or hurtful, would afford us matter of Admiration, if we consider'd 'em as we ought to do, and if we should find that in the General Harmony of the Creatures, they produce the same Effect as Bases and Trebles in a lovely Consort.

As for Monsters, most certain it is, that those petty Miscarriages and Deviations of Nature ought not to lessen the esteem, which it becomes us to have for Nature's Author: for that these Monsters no way render the World imperfect. On the contrary, this variety of Creatures, of which some are more perfect then others, contribute not a little to the Beauty of the Universe. Monstrous Animals are less perfect then others of their kind, whose Proportions are more just: but there are a thousand things which are to be admir'd in the structure of deformed Bodies, which could only be the Handy-work of an Infinite Power. 'Tis with Monsters as with Discords in Musick, where oft-times a Discord artfully intermixed with several Concords, makes the sweetest Harmony. Besides, these Monsters are the Consequences of that Communication, which is between the Imagination of the Mother, and the Fruits in her Womb; which Communication was most wisely establish'd for the forming of the Infant. True it is, that God might have prevented this Communication from
causing

causing any disorder ; but why may we not say as well, that it was the pleasure of God to order it so sometimes for the punishment of Men ? Sometimes to set a greater value upon the Beauty of his other Works ; Sometimes for other Reasons which are in Truth, unknown to us ; which nevertheless we ought not to find fault with, in regard, that of all those things that fall within our Knowledge , there is not any one that does not afford us ample occasion to acknowledge the infinite Wisdom of their Creator.

They wonder that there should be Inundations, Earthquakes, Subterranean Conflagrations, and other Accidents which seem to threaten the World with utter Ruin. But so far it is, that they from hence can prove there is not a Providence, that it is rather a proof of the contrary. For I beseech ye, were there not a Providence, how is it possible that the World should subsist in the midst of such violent Concussions, or that it should have held out so long time ? A Ship abandon'd to the Mercy of the Winds, without either Helm or Pilot can never run a steady course, without dashing against the Rocks, or being swallow'd up by the Waves.

Whence comes it then, that these subterranean Fires, these Earthquakes, and these Inundations cause not that universal Havock which they might do ? By what unexpected Power are the Effects of these dreadful Accidents, suspended or limited ? Who is it that corrects the distempers of a corrupted Air ? What Virtue purifies whole Cities and Regions infected with the Pestilence ?

Certainly he must be very blind, who sees not that 'tis the same hand which made the Universe that preserves it; and that after God has made use of these Inundations, these Fires and Earth-quakes for those ends, which to us are for the most part unknown, he stops 'em from going any farther, and destroying the vast Machine of the World.

Lastly, they are astonish'd, that Good Men should be so often oppress'd, and that the wicked should Triumph; That Impiety and Vice should Reign predominant, and that Innocence and Virtue should be overwhelmed. This is one of their great Objections, that has so much perplex'd the Wise in all Ages. *Claudian* confesses ingenuously, *That he questions whether the World be Governed by a Wise, Intelligent Providence, or by Blind Fortune, beholding Virtue under Oppression; and Rufinus the most famous Criminal of his Age, flourishing in High Advancement.* And it is reported of a certain Philosopher, that he became an Atheist, because he observ'd, that God did not inflict immediate Punishment upon a perjur'd Person. And the Wise *Cato*, unfortunate in fighting for the Liberty of his Country, could not forbear saying, *That there was a great Incertainty in the Government of the Gods.* To which I may add what is related of *Democritus*, *That he put out his Eyes with the Reverberation of a Glittering Buckler, because he would not behold the Prosperity of the Wicked.* Tho' I must confess, that this last Story seems to me very improbable. For what likelihood is there that *Democritus*, who only made it his Business to ridicule

dicule all the World, should be troubl'd at the Prosperity of the Ungodly ?

Now, tho' this Objection seems very plausible, nevertheless it is very easily answered. First it is not always true, that Virtue is oppress'd, and Vice recompenc'd. Good Men are not always Afflicted, and the Wicked are frequently punish'd; No Man will presume to deny it. Nor are there any Ages or Years that do not furnish us with Examples. Thus the same *Claudian*, who was offended at the Prosperity of *Rufinus*, says, That the Punishment which he receiv'd, absolv'd the Gods, *Abstulit hunc tandem Rufini Pena Tumultum, Absolvitq; Deos.* In the Second Place, People who are not so, are many times thought to be Virtuous and Good People, because they carry a fair Outside of Probity and Piety. 'Tis needless to produce any Proofs of it; 'tis agreed upon by all the World; there is no Person that has not been frequently deceiv'd; and there are an Infinite number who deceive themselves.

But to unfold this difficulty more clearly, I assert, that they most grossly deceive themselves, when they imagine the Wicked to be happy, because they appear to be so; because they are Rich; because they are advanced to vast preferments, and wallow in pleasure and delights. How many are there that seem to enjoy a Perfect Felicity, who are really most unfortunate, and tormented with bitter Pangs of an accusing Conscience? How many wealthy People are there, whose Condition is much more sad than that of the most Miserable Wretches? How ma-

ny great Men are there, who in their Elevated Stations enjoy no rest or quiet Day or Night ? I need no other Testimony then Tiberius, who could not forbear declaring to the Roman Senate, that every Day he dy'd a Cruel Death. Could you but look into the Insides of those that you esteem Happy and Rich, said Seneca, you would find 'em to be Miserable, to be Poor, to be Infamous, and that they resemble those Walls which are only Painted without side. Such a Felicity is no solid and true Felicity; 'tis only an Image and slight Appearance of it. For which reason it is, that while they can stand upon their Legs, and make a vain Bravado of Grandeur, they appear what they are not, and make People believe 'em happy. But if any accident befalls 'em, that puts 'em out of Order, and discovers 'em, then you come to see the Filth and Infamy that borrow'd Splendour conceals. And the Famous Historian Tacitus, speaking of Tyrants, could we but see their Souls laid open, says He, we should behold 'em torn and mangl'd by their own Crimes, like the Bodies of Criminals cut with the Lashes of the Whip. We must not wonder then to see the Wicked Potent and Rich, in Grandeur and Reputation ; so far from thence concluding that there is no Providence, that we have no reason to envy their Felicity.

I confess however, that there would be some reason to be astonish'd at their appearing Prosperity, were there no other Life but this, and that we were not then to come to Judgment. But before we blame the Conduct of the Almighty, or before we deny a Providence, we ought to be assur'd there is no other Life to be expected
after

after this, and that God will never punish those whom he now supports. Now I know not, whether there be any one to be met with who will presume to assert, that he is clearly convinced, that there is nothing to be thought of after this Life, that there is nothing to be hop'd or fear'd after Death, tho' there are several who endeavour to persuade themselves, that it is certainly true, with whom we shall enter the Lists in the sequel of our Discourse.

The Second Reflection is, That 'tis an Error to believe good Men Unhappy because they are afflicted; seeing that Afflictions are so useful to those that are expos'd to 'em, whereby to make 'em sensible of the Emptiness of this World, and the Vanities of it; to wean 'em from this Earth, and make 'em think of a better Life; to tame their Pride; to reduce 'em from their Deviations and Wandrings, and bring 'em back to their Duty. These are the Benefits of Misfortune, of which it would be easie to convince the most obstinate.

Now for a Man to be convinc'd, that Afflictions do not render the Sufferers unhappy, he needs no more, but to consider the Tranquility of mind which Good Men enjoy when they are most Afflicted. One would think sometimes that he suffers in the Body of another person, or that he is Insensible; or if it happen that through the Violence of his Pain, he discovers some Motions of Impatience, and lets fall some Murmurings, he recovers himself presently again. You shall see Serenity and Joy seated in his Countenance: You shall hear him bless God for Chastizing him

so much Lenity ; He acknowledges the Benefit of his Afflictions, and that he stood in need of such Paternal Correction.

If they, against whom I dispute, did but acknowledge the Divinity of the Scriptures, I could draw from thence an Infinite number of Proofs against 'em ; but I shall content my self with sending 'em to the School of a Pagan, I mean *Seneca*, who has Compos'd a Treatise upon this Subject *Why so many Calamities befall good Men ?* And thus he argues ;

“ When you see Good Men, and such as are
 “ acceptable to the Gods, in Pain, in Trouble,
 “ in Adversity, Travelling through a difficult and
 “ Rugged Road ; but on the contrary, behold
 “ the Wicked in Joy, in Plenty, in Pleasure, take
 “ notice that we are pleas'd with the Modesty
 “ of our Children, and the Liberty of our
 “ Servants, that we keep the first under severe
 “ Discipline, and that we sometimes bear with
 “ the boldness of the other. You ought to be-
 “ lieve the same thing of the Gods. They do
 “ not nurture Good Men in Pleasures and De-
 “ lights ; they try 'em, they harden 'em, they
 “ Train 'em up and Instruct 'em like Soldiers
 “ which they intend to list under their Banners.

And because it might be objected against him,
 “ Is it then advantageous to be Banish'd, to
 “ be reduc'd to Poverty, to behold the Death
 “ of Children, and a dearly beloved Wife, to be
 “ branded with Infamy, to see a Man's self be-
 “ rest of every thing ; He answers ; “ If you
 “ wonder that this should be advantageous to
 “ any Body, you may as well admire that some
 “ People

" People are Cur'd by Cutting and Burning, and
 " that Hunger and Drouth are made use of to
 " the same Effect: But if you consider with your
 " self, that sometimes for Healths-sake the Sur-
 " geon is forced to rife the Veins, to scrape and
 " pluck away the Bones, and cut off Members
 " which else would endanger the whole Body :
 " You may as well permit us to tell ye, that
 " there are Calamities no less advantageous to
 " those that endure 'em.

But some will say, if there be a Providence,
 how comes it to pass that Sin is permitted ?
 This is very near the same Argument, which a
 Pagan Philosopher made use of, *If there be a God,*
 said He, *whence proceeds Evil ?* But he as sud-
 denly recollects himself, *If there be no God, whence*
proceeds Good ? This Difficulty gave the Mani-
 chæans an Occasion to set up two Principles, the
 one of Good, the other of Evil ; and Manes
 borrow'd this Opinion from the *Persians*, who at-
 tribute all their Blessings to their God *Oromasdes*,
 and all their Evils to *Arimanius* ; as the *Egypti-*
ans made *Typhon* the Author of all their Calami-
 ties, while they look'd upon *Isis* and *Osiri* as the
 two Deities from which they received all their
 Kindnesses. I confess, we know not the Reason
 why God permits Sin ; yet all that can be in-
 ferr'd from thence, is only this, that still we
 know not the Designs of God ; but this Ignor-
 ance ought not to make us deny a Truth which
 we may clearly apprehend, and which is ground-
 ed upon the same Idea that we have of a most
 perfect Being. This is merely want of the force
 of Wit, and to abandon Evident Truths, for

Some Objections that are made us, which we cannot resolve, tho' the same Objections have no other Ground, then the Ignorance and Weakness of Human Understanding: So that those People, who are call'd *soaring Wits*, are indeed but *pettie Wits*, that have more of Pride in 'em then of Sense and Reason,

What! must we presently deny a Providence, because we are Ignorant of the Conduct of it? If there be a Providence, they Cry, there would be no Disorder; but if there be no Providence, there would be no ^{order} Confusion. Certainly, altho' we could never yet discover, why God was pleas'd to permit Sin to enter into the World, yet we ought to believe that he has done it for Reasons becoming a most perfect Being. More especially since Sin has given us an Opportunity to discover all the Properties of God, his Justice, his Holiness, his Mercy, his Power, his Wisdom, not to speak of the Admirable Work of our Redemption, wherein all the Virtues of a Deity have appeared with so much Lustre; but which God had never thought of, had there been no Sin.

Certain it is then, that there is a Providence; and this is that which it behov'd us to prove against the first Order of our *Indifferent Men*.

C H A P. V.

Against those who believe, that Providence does not concern it self in Affairs of Religion.

THere are some who dare not absolutely deny that there is a Providence; but they believe that it only concerns it self in things of Highest Importance, as Kingdoms, Empires, or Republicks, but never examines what Belief the Inhabitants of the World profess, as if it were indifferent to it what Men profess'd.

'Twill be no difficult thing to refute this Opinion. For first, 'tis an Error to believe that Providence has not the same share in the Government of Little as of Great Affairs. For why should we not believe, that God both Manages and Governs all that he preserves, and whatever he has made? Is it because it is beneath a God to take care of the smallest Insects? But why should that be so, when he has been pleas'd to produce 'em out of Nothing? Have we not rather reason to admire a Sovereign Being, who having all Creatures within the Extent of his Empire, causes 'em to subsist by his Word, and sustains 'em by his Power? Think they that God would debase himself too much in doing it? But if the Sun shines upon the most Contemptible Dunghils, yet cannot be said to disgrace himself, why will they not admit that God should act upon the meanest of his Creatures, without any diminution of his Grandeur and Majesty,

But

But they will say, That 'tis impossible that God should manage and govern all things; as if they could be ignorant that the Knowledge and Power of God are Infinite, and that if it be his will alone, there needs no more for him to do in the Ruling and Ordering of all things. And therefore, the Reason why our Indifferents argue so ill is this, because they have no other Idea of God then of a Man, whose illuminations are narrowly confin'd, whose strength is but very small, and who not being able to busie himself every where, is constrain'd to employ himself upon a certain Number of Objects.

Moreover, they imagine, that because we despise all those little things that are of no use to us, 'tis the same thing with God; never considering, that if God took no care but only of those Creatures that are useful to him, or of those only that bear some Proportion with him, all the Creatures, ev'n those only which we most esteem, not being able to add to or diminish any thing from his Glory and Felicity; and being all infinitely below him, he might equally disdain and neglect 'em all together.

But not to enter any farther into the Discussion of this Question, must not they be willingly blind, who dare presume to number what concerns the Worship which is due to the Deity, among things of little Importance? Is there any one which is of greater Moment, then that which has a regard to the Sovereign Being, which all Men ought to adore? And is it likely that God should Rule and Govern Monarchies and Republicks, and leave Men at their Liberty to serve him

him according to their Fancies? As if it were a thing Indifferent to Him, to be ador'd, for Example, under the shape of the most Vile and worthless Animals, as the Pagans painted some of their Gods. Is it possible that Men can have such extravagant thoughts of the most perfect of all Beings? Where is that King so Negligent as to permit his Subjects the Liberty to act according to their own humours in his Affairs, in his Armies, in his Exchequer, and leaves it to their Discretion to Obey and Serve him as their Capricio's lead 'em? How then can they who boast their Wit presume to say of God, the Wisest of all Beings, what no Man would adventure to say of a Person meerly Mortal?

Besides, were it true, that God took no care of things that concern Religion, whence comes it to pass, that they who are of this Opinion pay some certain Homage to the Deity? Wherefore do they sometimes pray to him, since God takes no notice of what they do, and consequently never troubles himself about their neglect of his Worship? Their Actions ill agree with their Belief, and cause those that see 'em to believe that they are of another Opinion. Therefore it was a good saying of one *Diocles*, who espying *Epicurus* in the Temple, cry'd out, *What a Feast, what a Spectacle is this for me, to see Epicurus in the Temple? All my Suspicions are Vanish'd, Piety renounces her Seat, and I never more clearly beheld the Grandeur of Jupiter, then now, that I see Epicurus upon his Knees.* Certainly, if this Opinion, which we have refuted were true, there would be never any more need of paying Worship to a Deity.

ry. 'Twas true, that *Epicurus* confess'd, that the Excellency of Divine Nature deserv'd of it self, that some Honour should be given to Her, tho' she concern'd her self no more with the World, then if there were no share of her in it, and tho' there were nothing to be expected by it from Her. But he only spoke thus in conformity to the Common Sentiments. For, in short, the God of that Phylosopher, according to his System, was a Piece apart from the Workmanship, which a Man might well suppose not to belong to it, and yet no change befall it. Otherwise it is certain, that if he had acted and spoken conformably to his Real Opinions, he would have said in plain Terms, that Piety was a fruitless thing, and he would never have perform'd any act of Religion. *Cicero* therefore rightly understood him, l. 1. de Nat. Deor. *There are some People, says he, and have been, before now, who believe that the Gods never meddle with human Affairs. But if that Opinion be true, what will become of Piety?*

C H A P. VI.

Of the Immortality of the Soul.

I Come to those who never much torment themselves, whither there be any Providence or no, because they hold the Soul to be Mortal, that it perishes with the Body, or at least, that there is no farther fear of any thing after this Life; that there will be no Judgment; that all that has been said of Paradise and Hell
are

are meer Fables, such as the Pagan feign'd of their *Elifian* Fields, &c. And therefore that all Religions ought to be indifferent to Us; since we shall be never the more Happy, nor the more Unfortunate, whatever Religion we Embrace.

'Tis a wonderful thing, that there should be found among Christians, Men that dare deny what the Heathens have acknowledg'd, and what the most Barbarous of Nations acknowledge to this Day, as we are given to understand by many Relations. And this to such a degree, that far from believing that the Soul perishes, they have rather chosen to hold, some of 'em, that the Soul was from all Eternity. Others, that when the Soul took leave of one Body it transmigrated into another, or else was re-united to God; or that it was transform'd into some Angel or Devil; or that it intermix'd it self with the Elements. And this Opinion of the Soul's being Immortal, infused that Courage and Undauntedness into 'em, which they made appear in Fight, as *Bartholinus* observes of the *Danes*, in his Book of the Antiquity of *Denmark*.

'Tis a thing so much the more surprizing, because there are an Infinite Number of Reasons that convince us of the Immortality of the Soul. I might prove it by the ardent Desires of Immortality, and by that Idea which we naturally have of a future Life; an Idea which nothing can Eradicate: So that there is no person who independly from all Consideration, and from all Education, but either fears or hopes something, according as he has either led a Virtuous or Vicious Life,

Life, when he ponders upon that same darksome and gloomy Futurity, wherein the Present Life sets from our Eyes. But to make out this Truth as clear as day, I argue thus. If the Soul dy'd, such a Death would happen, either because the parts of it would come to separate, or because it would destroy it self; or because some other created Substance would destroy it, or because that God himself would annihilate it. There can be conceiv'd no other Causes of the Soul's dying. But it is certain, that there can nothing like this be said of our Soul.

1. It cannot be said, that the Parts of the Soul separate from one another; because the Soul has no parts. It is a Spirit. And he must be blind that dares deny it, and assert, that the Soul is no more then Matter, then Wind, or a Vapour, then a Certain Agitation of subtil Spirits intermix'd with the Blood. It is impossible to conceive, that a Soul which knows it self, and all other Beings that surround it, that reaches sublime Truths, that knows an Invisible God, that reflects with it self upon its own thoughts, that measures the Stars, the Earth, and Seas, that corrects our Senses and Imagination; that penetrates into Futurity, and discovers the deepest Secrets, should be nothing but anagitated Matter; because that nothing is more incomprehensible then a Body that thinks, that reasons, that deliberates and reflects upon it self. Which way soever the Parts of a Body are chang'd, it can never be brought to that pass by those various Changes or Rangings, that if it knew not it self before, it should ever come to know it self; nor could

could it ever be made capable of having one single thought. With all the Efforts of our Wit, we can never comprehend what *Epicurus* said, That our Reasonings and our Idea's are no more then the Agitation of certain Little Bodies, and that the Circular Motion of an Atome, may be the Vast and Immense Idea of Infinity. It is also as absurd to say that a Body knows, as to say that a thought is Red or Green; that the Act of arguing is Hot or Cold, or that a Metaphysical Speculation is round or square. 'Tis clear then, that the Soul is not Material, and that by Consequence it has no parts; and therefore it cannot dye. No Sickness can destroy it, because it has no blood, nor humour that can feed it, Neither Sword, nor Fire can kill it, because it has no parts that Iron can divide, or Fire consume.

2. Neither can the Soul be said to destroy it self; for Right Reason teaches us, that nothing tends of it self to its own Destruction and Ruin; that every Being is desirous of it self to remain in the same Condition wherein it is; and that every Change that happens to any subject proceeds from an Exterior Cause; besides, that it can never be conceiv'd how a Soul should destroy it self.

3. It cannot be said, that the Soul can be destroy'd by other Created Substances; because we ought not to assure our selves of what we cannot conceive, unless God reveals it to us. Now it is impossible to comprehend that a Created and finite Substance, can destroy a Spiritual Nature; nor do we know it to be otherwise by Revelation,

4. It cannot be said, that God destroys and annihilates our Souls. For besides that the Annihilation of a Being, is one of those things of which there is not any example in Nature; we have no Revelation that God designs the Annihilation of Souls. On the contrary, if they with whom we contend, would acknowledge the Divinity of Scripture, it would be easie for me to produce 'em proofs, which invincibly make out this immortality which we assert.

This First Argument may be supported by a Second, which is this, That if the Soul be not immortal, and that there be no other Life after this, we must then conclude, that it was only given to Man to render him more miserable than the Beasts, and to be a torment to him. For if Man had not a Rational Soul, the Remembrance of what is pass'd, the Consideration of the Present, and the Apprehension of Futurity would never afflict his Mind; but he would be like the Beasts, which if we may believe the new Philosophers, feel no pain, or, if they do feel any, 'tis only a present pain. If then the Soul be not immortal, it would have been better that God had made us walking Machines, then to give us a Soul only to make us Suffer.

'Tis said, that Man being so like to Beasts, all dies with him, as it is with other Creatures. But this Objection is unworthy a Rational Man. 'Tis true, that there is some Conformity between a Man and a Beast. A Man is Born and is subject to Death; he preserves his Life by nourishment, and his Kind by Generation, and he is subject to the irregularities of Humors.

mors. All this is common with the Beasts. I confess likewise that there is a Conformity which is disgraceful to Man; and this is that which consists in the disorders of the Body and Sences, and the Predominancy of the Passions. 'Tis a shame to Man, that his Passions over-rule him, where Reason ought to Command, and that he is not the Master of his own Body, nor of all the Motions of it. Nevertheless, all that can be concluded from hence, is, that Man is Mortal, so far as he has any thing of Conformity with Beasts. But we must renounce our Reason, if we deny that Man has not an infinite number of things that exalt him above Brutes; and in that respect it is, that Man is Immortal.

Altho they who believe the Soul to be Mortal, laugh at the Revelation, yet there are some who make use of a Passage in *Ecclesiastes*, to confirm their Opinion: 'Tis in the *Chap. 13. 19, 20, 21.* *The same thing befalls both Man and Beasts, the death of the One is like the death of the other, both the one and the other breathe the same Breath, and Man has no advantage above a Beast; for all is vanity; All goes the same way; All was dust and to dust they shall return. Who knows whether the breath of Man mounts upward, or whether the breath of a Beast descends downward.*

But if these People who borrow the Authority of *Salomon* to support their Error, had read the Book from which they fetcht their Argument, they would have seen that that same Great and Wise Prince was far from believing the Soul to be Mortal. His aim is there, only to withdraw the hearts of Men from the Love of the

the World, from their extraordinary Propensity to the Creatures, and all things that fall under the Senses. On purpose to incline and persuade 'em to Love, to Fear, and Serve the Lord only. And this is the conclusion which he draws at the end of his Book from all the Arguments which he produc'd before. The scope of the whole Discourse is, *Fear God and keep his Commandments; for this is the whole Duty of Man.* Now I leave it to Judgment, Whether if *Salomon* had thought that the Soul did not subsist after death, he would have taken so much pains, to excite Men to the exercises of Piety, for which there was no reward to be expected, since the Belief of the Immortality of the Soul, is the Foundation of Piety and Religion.

But for an absolute Conviction, that this Great King did not believe the Soul to be mortal, there needs no more then to read his Tenth Chapter. From the very beginning he threatens Men with a Judgment to come, and exhorts 'em to remember God in the days of their youth, and not to delay their Turning to God till the last years of their Lives. A needless Exhortation if the Soul were to dye. For what reason is there that Man should fear any thing after death, if All were to dye with him. Afterwards in the 9th Verse he tells us in express terms, *That the dust returns to the earth from whence it was taken, but that the Spirit returns to God that gave it.* Is not this an invincible Proof that he believed the Immortality of our Souls. For how could it be said, that our Spirit should return to God that gave it; if it subsisted no long-

er after it was departed from the Body which it enlivened. Is it possible that a nothing of Soul and Spirit should return to the Bosom of God?

The wise *Salomon* so little believ'd our Soul to be Mortal, that in the same Chapter, *ver. 17.* he says, *God shall judge the Just and the Unjust; and then shall be the time for all things, and over all his Works.* which he would never have said, had he had the least Thought that our Soul died with the Body.

So that by the Passage which they alledge, he meant no other thing, but that in respect of the Body, the condition of the Beasts was equal to that of Men, that the same thing befalls him; and that to judge by outward appearances, when we see a Man dye, it seems as if he dy'd like a Beast; and that there was no difference between 'em. And this was the Judgment which the Prophane Libertines in *Salomon's* time made of it.

But what we have said, is certainly the precise sence of the words. For if from the saying of *Ecclesiastes*, *Who knows whether the breath of a Beast ascends upward, and the breath of a Beast descends downward?* We must conclude that if *Salomon* was ignorant of that which was to happen, he would have spoken against his own knowledge, seeing that in the 12th Chapter he says expressly, *That the Spirit returns to God.* We must also believe, that he questions whether or no the Breath of Beasts descended downward, since he makes use of the same Expression, who knows whether the Breath of a Beast, &c. Now is this a thing that so wise a Man as *Salomon* could doubt of, or could he be inclin'd to observe an Error which few believe, that

that the Spirit of Beasts is immortal? Tho' we must confess there are some people that are of this Opinion, if we may believe the *Portuguese Relation of the Eastern Æthiopia*.

It will be said, perhaps, that the Soul being strictly united with the Body, it cannot be conceiv'd how the Body should dye, and the Soul be Immortal. But this Argument is absurd: for were the Soul and Body of the same Nature, there were some room for this Objection. But in regard they are of a different Nature, and that the motions of the Soul are absolutely independent from those of the Body; As for example, when she meditates upon God; Why may we not say, that it subsists without a Body like the Angels? And so much for this subject; Let us now examine whether we ought to believe a day of Judgment?

Of the Judgment to come.

IT is impossible to reflect upon the Nature of God, without being convinc'd of a Day of Judgment. The *Idea* which we have of
 * us God, obliges ~~him~~ to look upon him as a Being Supreamly Wise, most Just, most Holy, and most Perfect, But we can never consider him as a Being most Wise, Just, and Perfect, unless we understand at the same time, that he is one day to call Men to Judgment, and to reward or punish 'em, according as they have lived upon the Earth. In short, How can it be conceiv'd, that a God who made all things, who loves Order and

and Holiness to the highest Degree, and who always acts conformably to his Virtues, can let go unpunish'd the Contempts which his Creatures put upon his Laws, and that he can look with the same Glances of his favour upon those that employ themselves in his Praises, and they that Vomit forth Blasphemies against him; those that confess his Holy Name, and those that abjure it; upon Virtuous Men, and the most Infamous Debauchees; upon *St. Peter* and a *Herod*; upon *St. Paul* and a *Nero*; a *St. John* and a *Domitian*; and yet this is that which we must say of God, were it true that there would be no Day of Judgment. For that Person must be very Ignorant of the Affairs and Transactions of this World, who understands not, that Punishment does not always attend the Transgression, and that the Wicked are not always Chastiz'd; but that the Innocent are sometimes oppress'd, and the Guilty justify'd.

Now can we believe, that the Sanctity and Wisdom of God would suffer Virtue to remain without Reward, or Vice without Punishment, had he not decreed a Day wherein to render unto every Man according to his Works? No, doubtless, God has not suffer'd the Wicked all to go Unpunish'd, that Men might not believe there was no Providence; nor does he punish all, that Men might thence infer, there will be a time of Judgment. The Invisible Hand of God collects together whatever Man does, whatever he thinks, and whatever he says; all is hoarded up in the Treasure of his Justice. But after God has gather'd all his Magazine, he will return all back again,

again, and cause to Re-descend on Men, whatever Men sent up to Heaven.

To this first Argument, in my Opinion, another may be added, which is taken from the Remorse, the Troubles, and the Agitations of Conscience, when a Man has committed any Crimes, tho' secret Transgressions; and such are not to be discover'd. For from whence proceed those Terrors, I beseech ye, if it be not from an Apprehension of a Judgment, which there is no possibility of avoiding?

It may be objected perhaps, that there are none but the weaker sort that labour under these Disquiets, these Turmoils and stings of Conscience; little Children, poor Ideots, and silly Women. But where is that Man, who having sworn a false Oath, committed a Murder, or any other Crying Act of Injustice, is not sensible of the sharpe Rebukes and Upbraidings of his Conscience? 'Tis not what Women only or Children do; this is a question reaches all that have offended against Heaven.

It may be also farther said, that 'tis the Apprehension of the Rigour of Human Laws which causes all those Terrors, not the Dread of any Celestial Tribunal. But whence then comes it to pass, that those Monarchs, who set themselves above the Reach of all Terrestrial Justice, and boasted of their Abominations, were not exempted from these Affrights and Convulsions of self-Conviction; such as *Nero*, *Tiberius*, *Caligula*, *Caracalla*, who were flattered every day, that they might do what they pleas'd, and who never heard

a word of the Law of God, of the Severity of his Justice, or of a Judgment to come ?

Others will alledge, that these Commotions are the Effect of our Education. But how comes it, that we neglect and condemn so many other things infus'd into us by our Education, but never can deface these deep Impressions ? Whence proceeds it, that all Mankind, with their conjoin'd Efforts, could never calm these Tempestuous Agitations, nor dissipate these Fears ? Whence comes it to pass, that upon th' approach of Death, the Greatest Libertines, and most Profane, tremble at the remembrance of their Impiety, and their Horrors still augment, the nearer they draw toward their end ? For, if nothing were to follow but Annihilation, whence so much Agony.

Lastly, it will be said, that there are many People who feel none of these Inward Strings. But besides that, it would be a difficult thing to name any of those Persons whose Consciences are altogether dead and Insensible ; and that others might be thought to be void of all Fear, because they knew how to conceal it ; their Inconsiderable Number can by no means weak'n our Argument ; as it does not follow that the Existence of God is not a Truth beyond Controul, because there are some perhaps that do not believe it.

The Universal Consent, in reference to this Point, of all Nations that have acknowledg'd a Deity, is a sufficiently convincing Proof of the Truth of what we positively assert. For how comes it, that so many Men agree in this particular,

cular, altho' they differ in so many other Things? Is it not a Proof that this is one of those Truths of which we come to the knowledge as soon as we begin to make use of our Reason, and which we cannot withstand without renouncing the Light of our Intellects? It would be no difficult Thing for me to prove this Universal Consent, would I but collect together what the Pagans have written concerning the condition of Souls after Death; of the Judges before whom they were to appear; of the Punishments and Rewards prepar'd for Men in the other World; all that

Plato believ'd upon this Subject; * *Plat. de Repub. l. II.* and Particularly the * Recital which he causes one *Amnienius* to make in his Republic, whom he

introduces return'd to Earth twelve Days after his Death, to make a Report of all that is transacted in Hell, and giving an Account, that the Judges, before whom the Souls of the Departed appear, place the Just upon the Right hand, and the Wicked upon the Left, and cause the Virtuous to ascend to Heaven, while the Latter are forced to descend.

I might add what *Strabo* relates of the *Brachmans* among the Indians; what is recited to us by those who have Travell'd into *Asia*, *Africa*, and *America*. And I might add to all these Proofs, another, which might be drawn from the Opinion of almost all Nations, that there was a necessary Duty incumbent upon 'em to appease the Deity; which prevail'd so far, that many offer'd Human Sacrifices for that purpose.

I add to all these Arguments this Reflection, That if there be no future Judgment, Virtue is no more then a Fantom, and that 'tis a Folly to pursue her Maxims: Men may give themselves over to all sorts of Crimes and Impieties, without Reluctancy; he may be a Traytor, Perjur'd Wretch, a Knave, a Faithless Villain, an Adulterer; from this time forward he has no more to do but to make himself most powerful in Society, and preserve his Life, since he has nothing to fear after Death, no more then if he had led a Life the most Exact and Virtuous that could be imagin'd. But where is that Man to be found that wou'd not abominate an Opinion, that favours, in this manner, the most Horrid of Crimes, and most Impious Enormities? Or if it were receiv'd, what Man would be willing to brook that the World should be no other then a wide Receptacle of only Thieves and Robbers, a meer Chaos, where there was no Curb upon the Conscience?

C H A P. VIII.

Where it is prov'd, that altho' we had no certain Proofs of a Judgment to come, yet we ought to live in such a manner, as if we were assur'd of one.

LET us press a little closer upon those against whom we dispute, and put the Question to 'em, whether they are well assur'd, that all that is said of the Day of Judgment

ment and Life to come, are Fables and Stories, as they loudly gave out. Do they believe it to be a thing contrary to the Virtue of a most Perfect Being, to punish those who have so often Violated his Laws, those that refus'd to obey him, and whom he spar'd in this Life? Is it less becoming God to be Just then to be Merciful? I question whether any Body will presume to uphold it, tho' there are many who have doubted the Truth of the Day of Judgment; and others, who upon their Death-beds have said, That they were going to be inform'd of three Things; whether there were a God? whether the Soul were Immortal? and whether there were a Heaven or Hell? a very Edifying Confession. I will grant that our *Indifferent-Men* may not be absolutely convinc'd by our alledg'd Reasons, or by any others which we could produce; However, they must confess, that there is some cause to Question, whether the Sentiment which they have embrac'd be true or no. They believe, that all Remorse of Conscience proceeds from the Prejudices of Education. But I believe they proceed from an Apprehension of being punish'd for what we have committed, and from the fear of a Judgment, which is not possible for us to avoid. They say, that I am deceiv'd; yet they ought at least to acknowledge, that it is not so clear that I am in an Error; but that there may be some reason to doubt whether I am or no. This then appears to be their Condition, that they know not certainly, according to their own Confession, whether they shall be Eternally Miserable, as it is requisite for 'em to acknowledge that

that they have deserv'd to be by their Transgressions, or whether they shall be annihilated. Good God ! What an Uncertainty is this ! Would it not then be better, in the midst of this uncertainty, to practise that which would gain 'em Eternal Felicity, if it be true that there is a Paradise, then to do those things that are rewarded with Eternal Pains, if there be a Judgment, or a Hell ? In the choice of Opinions, which Men know not certainly whether they be true or false, sound Judgment and right Reason require, that Men should prefer that Steerage that leads 'em to gain, if truth be on their side, and where there is nothing to lose, if they be deceiv'd ; and on the other hand, reject that by which they can gain nothing, tho' they were in the Right, but much to lose, should it prove their Misfortune to be deluded. This is now our Case. A Man who lives as if he were to be judg'd, has nothing to be afraid of, supposing he should be deceiv'd, but every thing to hope for, if he be not in an Error. He has nothing to be afraid of, if he has been mistaken, unless it be, that after Death he finds no God, no Paradise, nor meets any more with himself again. I confess, that this is to be look'd upon as a great Misfortune ; but at least he ought no more to be afraid of any suffering, or that he shall be more Miserable than he who has liv'd, as if there were no Judgment to be expected. Both the one and the other must lose their Being, and all the Consequences of Being, as Pain, Pleasure, Felicity, and Misery. This is the greatest Mischief that can befall a Good Christian, supposing him to be

in an Error. But if he be not deceiv'd, he may be sure of enjoying Felicity Eternal, and Infinite Happiness. There is then great Gain attends him, if he be not deluded; but there is nothing to lose in case he be, by the Confession of the ungodly themselves. On the other side, a Man who believes not a last Judgment, and who lives in the unbelief of it, has nothing to hope for, if he be not deceived, because his greatest Felicity is to be annihilated; but every thing to be afraid of, if he be under a mistake. For if at his departure out of the World, he finds there is a God, that there is a Judgment, or a Hell, there cannot be imagin'd a Creature more miserable.

Now let any Man judge, whether it be riot the Accomplishment of Extravagance, to make choice of an Opinion, whereby a Man runs the risk of being Eternally Miserable, and hopes for nothing but Annihilation: And whether, tho' there were no certain proofs of a Judgment to come, it were not better for 'em always to demean themselves, as if they were to be judg'd. I say no more; for this is sufficient to shew, that since our *Indifferent Men* are not assur'd that there is no Judgment, they ought not to build upon this Opinion the *Indifferency* of Religions.

C H A P. IX.

Wherein is examin'd, whether there be any thing True or False, Just or Unjust.

AMong those whom I call *Indifferent Men*, there are some who believe, that there is nothing True or False, Just or Unjust, so that it is lawful to do whatever a Man pleases, and to embrace that Religion that agrees most with their Interests. Who could ever believe that in our Age there should be People that should go about to introduce such Scepticism into Religion. There is nothing True, say they: Yet at least, according to their Sentiments, it must be true, that there is nothing True. Moreover, is it not True, that they who maintain this Argument, have a Being, that they are Thinking Souls, and extended Bodies; That it is impossible a Thing should be, and not be at the same time, that Two and Two make Four, and that the Whole is bigger then the Part? Certainly, there is no body so extravagant as to deny it. We do not dispute of this matter, will the *Indifferent Men* say; but of things that concern Religion, I grant it. 'Tis already very much, that they will confess that there is something True; but still it is not true, that there is a God; that this God is most Perfect, most Just, Omnipotent, &c. At least, it is no more True, then to say, there is no God, or, that this God is an imperfect Being and Unjust:

I do not believe that these Skepticks dare deny it, unless they will speak against their own

Consciences. For then there is nothing so easie as to deny every thing, and to maintain at Noon-day that the Sun is not risen, or that a Circle is a Square. I am well assur'd, that if our *Pyrrhoni-ans* would speak sincerely, they would acknowledge, that it is also true, that God ought to be serv'd, and that, in such a manner as is agreeable to his Nature. They are therefore most grossly mistaken, who assert, that there is nothing of Truth. In short, every Proposition ought to be True or False. It is True, when it affirms or denies nothing of a subject, but what we ought to affirm or deny. It is False, when it affirms or denies what ought not to be affirm'd or deny'd. But is it not certain, will our Skepticks say, that upon every Subject we may find out Reasons, *pro* and *con*, equally strong and convincing? I grant there are several Subjects upon which Men may argue variously; insomuch that they shall be at a great loss which side to take, before they have carefully weigh'd and consider'd the Arguments on both sides. I confess also, that there are some very evident Truths that have been disputed among Philosophers; among others, some have deny'd Motion. Wit loves to sport sometimes, and endeavours to obscure by Sophisms, Things the most plain and perspicuous: but I deny, that what is said on both sides is equally solid, and that it is fit to compare Sophisms with good Arguments. There are some propositions to which we cannot refuse our assent; and some that we cannot deny without acting against the Light of our Understanding. There are some that are not so apparent, and others that openly

ly oppose Reason. All that our Skeptricks say, does but teach us, that we ought to stand upon our Guards, and not to hasten our Judgment with too much precepitancy, but to suspend it, till Conviction, and our Understanding force us from that Hesitation. So that I extremely approve the Rules set down by a Philosopher of our Age, who would have us, when we propose any thing, not only carefully to examin the Thing, and to determin nothing till after we have well thought upon it, but also to see,

1. Whether it be not true, that we believe the thing in dispute for no other Reason, but because our Masters have so taught us.

2. Whether it be not True, that we believe the thing upon no other account, but only because it was approved by a great number of Persons that have gain'd a Repute in the World.

3. Whether it be not True, that we believe the thing, by reason of long Use and Custom; that is to say, Because we have such an *Idea* in our heads from our Education and our Infancy, and for that we judge that several things were True, because they were conformable to that *Idea*.

4. Whether it be not True, that we conclude the Truth in Dispute, from a supposed Principle, and such a one which we never examin'd.

5. Whether it be not True, that we believe the Thing, only because it is a Novelty.

These are the Precautions which we ought to take; but 'tis an extravagancy, to maintain that there is nothing True. We naturally all of us love Truth, and we desire to find it out. Is it then to be thought that this Desire should be En-

grafted in all Men, if there were nothing True or False?

What I assert of Truth, I also speak of Justice or Injustice; that is to say, that there is something of Just or Unjust, and that there is a necessary distinction between Good and Evil, between that which is Honest, and that which is not so.

In short, were there no reason for this distinction, it must be said, that Paracides and Blasphemers, to speak Properly, Commit no Crime; that 'tis the same thing whether we Hate or Love God; whether we Honour our Parents, or Cut their Throats.

Now I beseech ye, Can such Sentiments enter our Thoughts without Horror? They will say, perhaps, that this Horror proceeds from the Prejudices of Education. But if it be so, How comes it to pass, that the same Horror is Universal among all People, tho' their Education be very different?

They will likewise object, that Legislators, and Governors of States and Kingdoms have taken great Care to infuse into the People, that there is something of Just and Unjust. But is it probable, that those Legislators could have agreed so exactly without consulting together, to impose the same things upon so many different People? That they were so sufficiently powerful, as to engrave their Precepts in the bottom of the Peoples Hearts; or so politick and cunning, as to inspire into 'em that niceness, as to make it a scruple of Conscience to disobey 'em? Or how is it to be imagin'd, that so vast a number of
People

People would entertain and uphold Laws that recompence Virtue, and punish Vice, but which are otherwise so very severe and irksom, unless there were a Natural Light, which makes all Men agree in the point of their Justice.

Had not Man a Natural Idea, and a Natural Love of Duty, Men might be made believe in that particular, whatever Imposture pleas'd; and they might be persuaded, that Ingratitude, Perfidiousness, and Blasphemy, are Virtues which ought to be esteemed; Nevertheless, nothing is more Impossible.

It will be said, that several Nations have submitted to Bad Laws as well as good. But certain it is, that never any Legislators could impose those Laws which were altogether bad. The Lawgivers concern'd, still intermix'd 'em among the good ones, and endeavour to support 'em with good Principles, already in vogue among the People: They have also made use of Force to establish or preserve 'em; so that submission to unjust Constitutions is a proof of the Necessity of those which are just.

But let us press a little closer upon our *Symbionians*. Either they are bound to obey their Reason, or they are not. If they are not oblig'd, their Reason stands 'em in no stead, and it is in Vain that Nature has made 'em Rational Creatures. If they are bound, they do ill when they withdraw their Obedience from it. Therefore there is a difference between Good and Evil. It will be objected, no doubt, that Reason dictates to one Man that the Thing is Good, to another, that it is Bad, so that it depends purely upon

upon humour. But certain it is, that there are some things good, and others bad, by the Consent of all Mankind. So that in that respect, our Reason is beyond all Controul. Moreover, the Force of that Objection reaches no farther then to prove, that all Men have not the same parts; and that they do not all distinguish Good and Evil as they ought to do. But they are not able to prove from thence that there is nothing Just or Unjust: On the other side, 'tis a certain proof, that Men have naturally an Idea, that there is some thing Just, and some thing which is not so.

Let us then put this Question to our Sceptics, whether the Creature owes Nothing or Something to his Creator? No Man durst hitherto maintain, that the Creature owes him Nothing. If any thing, he is oblig'd to performances, and if he do not pay what he owes, he does ill. There are some things, which are good in themselves, and others which are not so; and therefore 'tis to build a Sandy Foundation, to pretend to prove that Religions are Indifferent, because there is nothing by Nature Good or Evil.

I shall add but one word more in Opposition to those who assert, that to speak properly, there is nothing Just but what agrees with our Interest, or with the Public Benefit. This Opinion is very absurd, 1. Because, that Right Reason obliges us frequently to act against our own Interests, and Commands us to do those things that prove mischievous and hurtful to us, as it prohibits us from other things that might redound to our Benefit, yet after we have followed the Dictates

States of Right Reason, receive a great deal of Comfort and Satisfaction for so doing. 2. Because, that if Profit and Advantage were to be the Chief Rule of our Actions, our first Beginning and last End, there would be no Truth nor Sincerity between Man and Man, it would be in vain that Nature has made us Sociable Creatures, and it would behove us rather to say, that Men were Created to be Robbers and Poisoners, when their Interest requir'd it; which is the most Horrid thing in the World. 3. Because, that if Profit were to be the Rule of all our Actions; and if the Idea of Honesty were a meer Illusion, all Men in the World would never distinguish as they do between Profitable and Honest; and Men the most Corrupt would never be sensible from time to time, of the Force of that Idea. For this is a convincing Proof, that this Idea is one of the First Establishments of Nature.

C H A P. X.

Against those who believe, that the Truth is Conceal'd.

IN the Croud of our Indifferent-Men, there are some who dare not positively maintain, that there is nothing true; but they believe that Truth is plung'd in Democritus's Well, and that it is entirely Conceal'd from Men; and that therefore, 'tis no great matter what Religion we Embrace, because we know not where Truth resides.

But

But what we have already said in the foregoing Chapter, shews the Absurdity of this Opinion. For we have sufficiently prov'd, that all these Truths are not conceal'd from Men, but that there are a great Number, who are clearly Convinc'd, that there is a God, that he is most Wise, Almighty, most Perfect, that we ought to serve him, and that we ought to do as we would be done by.

In short, it would be a strange thing if there were no Truths; that God had given us understanding capable to reach and apprehend 'em, and yet that he should not have reveal'd 'em to us, or that he should not have fix'd a kind of Relation between those Truths and our Understandings, to know when they meet, and when they do not meet, together. In like manner, it would be a surprizing thing, that God should have Created Light, and given Men Eyes to see it, yet never produce it into the World. The Idea which we have of God, is, that he is a Being both good and gracious by doing good. Now what Idea can we have of a God that has made Creatures, and yet would conceal himself from 'em; who has endu'd 'em with Reason to understand Truth, yet had not reveal'd to 'em those Truths which it most concern'd 'em to know?

If it be objected, that there are an infinite number of Truths which Man can never dive into by the Light of Nature, we must be forc'd to grant it, because we cannot deny it. 'Tis not to speak of the Mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation, &c. which the Christian Religion has taught us, and into which the wit of Man can never

never penetrate ; there are several other Truths less difficult to apprehend ; which Men however had been altogether ignorant of, had it not been for Revelation. For Example, Men might naturally know, by the Light of Reason only, that there is a God, and that this God ought to be ador'd, but he knows not after what manner this Sovereign Being will be ador'd. He knows that he is a Sinner, but he knows not by the Light of Nature, which way to make his Peace with God. He may know that his Soul is immortal ; but he knows not what will become of his Soul : nor had the Pagans in this Particular any other then confus'd Idea, which may be well judg'd by what the Emperor *Adrian* said. And it appears by the Discourses of *Socrates*, that Wise Philosopher, before his Death, that he was no better inform'd upon this Subject then the Emperor.

It is certain then, that Revelation is necessary ; but we assert also, that this Revelation has been made ; and that God has manifested to Men whatever is requisite for 'em. to know, to the end they may be happy ; and this is that Revelation which we meet with in the Old and New Testament.

CHAP.

C H A P. XI.

Of the Divinity of the Scripture.

IN regard there are several Persons that will not acknowledge the Books of the Old and New Testament to be Divinely inspir'd, 'tis necessary to settle the Confirmation of this Truth before we go any farther ; and this is that which we shall succinctly undertake in this Chapter, until we shall have accomplish'd it more at large, with God's permission, in another Treatise.

Nor do I believe it to be a thing so difficult to demonstrate the Divinity of the Scriptures, as at first it seems to be. For either they must say, that God has not made himself known, or that he has reveal'd himself, but that we know not where this Revelation is : or else they must confess, that it is to be found in the Scriptures. They cannot say, that God has not made himself known, for we have prov'd in the foregoing Chapter, that they cannot maintain it, without having a very unworthy Idea of God. They cannot say, that God has reveal'd himself, but that they know not where this Revelation is. For wherefore should God have reveal'd himself, if the Book be not known wherein he has declar'd his Will to Men ? Therefore they must confess, that God has made himself known in the Books of the Old and New Testament. For they cannot tell us of any other ; because there is no other which has more the Characters of Divinity ; and those Characters
are

are so visible, that he must willingly hoodwink his own Eyes that cannot see 'em.

In short, what could be desir'd in a Book of which God was the Author, then what is found in the Sacred Writings? Who is there that would not look upon it as a Divine Work? *A Book* that teaches us Truths so Extraordinary, so Sublime, that Men could never otherwise have been able to have invented; Yet such as have a strict Coherence and Tye however with the Common Notions, which Nature, or rather the God of Nature has imprinted in our Minds; and which teaches 'em in a manner so lofty and so plain at the same time, that tho' there seem not to appear in it any Ornaments of Vulgar Eloquence, yet there is all that human Art can afford Us; a Sovereign Authority which Imprints respect in the Soul of him that reads it, and a winning Facility, which attracts and captivates their Attention.

A Book, that gives us a greater Idea of God, then can be conceiv'd; that describes him to us as a Spirit, that has no Communication with matter; an Infinite Spirit that is every where, an Almighty Being, that does all things; that Created the World, and sustains it by his Providence; who is the Ruler of all Events, the absolute Master of all things, the Judge of Men and Angels.

A Book, which clearly Unfolds to us, what Human Reason would never have discover'd but very imperfectly, which never pronounces any Censures, nor gives any Censures, but what the Conscience finds to be most just; that promises nothing but what the Conscience desires; that threatens

threatens nothing but what the Conscience dreads: and does it not thence appear, that the Author of the Conscience is the Author of this Book.

A Book, that Humbles Man before God, by giving him to understand his emptiness, his profound wretchedness, his natural Corruption and Sin: that romages the very Secrets and Entrenchments of our Souls, to shew us our conceal'd Vices, our Vanity, our Pride, our Self-Love, our Love of the World, our Love of Revenge, the Seeds of Incredulity and Prophaneness.

A Book, that combats all sorts of Sins, not one excepted, not so much as the slightest; and several that were unknown to the most austere Sects of Philosophers; not so much as a Glance or a Thought escapes it; it assails all the Motions of Concupiscence, and all Appearances of Evil.

A Book, that is not contented to ^{pre}scribe us an exterior Holiness, but which requires that our Souls should be as pure as our Bodies, and that we should exalt our Virtue to an Heroick Degree, and be like God.

A Book, that requires that we should have no other Rule but the Law and Will of God; and no other end but his Glory, and which exacts from us, that we should principally, and above all things in the World, love the Author of our Being, and that we should love our Neighbor as our Selves.

A Book, that has nothing of Contradiction in all the Parts of it; and which presents to our Eyes the Idea of a Wisdom, like to that which is observ'd in this vast Universe; tho' they who wrote

wrote it, never had any communication one with another, but were separated by long Intervals of Ages, which shews that they were all inspir'd with the same Spirit, and that they had a Sovereign Master over 'em, who precided over the whole work.

A Book, which has foretold extraordinary Events before they happen'd ; and with so much certainty, that you would rather take it to be a recital of things past, then a prediction of things to come : which shews us, that it springs from a Spirit, before which all things are present, which sees all things, and which clearly shines in the darkness of Futurity, in regard that nothing happens which it has not ordain'd.

A Book, which having discover'd to Man, that he is Criminal, and Guilty before an Infinite Majesty, which must be atton'd, teaches him afterwards the true means by which he was reconcil'd to his Judge, and shews him a Divine Person, that descends from Heaven to take upon him Human Nature like his own, who under that Nature suffers a cruel Death ; who by that Death satisfies the Justice of God, extinguishes the Heat of his Wrath, and makes an Attonement for our sins, which the Blood of Bulls and Goats, nor all the Purifications of the Law were never able to expiate.

A Book, that appeases all the troubles of the Soul, which all the Books in the World were never able to do ; which secures us against all our Terrors, caused by the Consideration of our Sins, the thoughts of Death, and of a Judgment to come, and fills us with that Peace and Comfort,

fort, which neither can be express'd nor conceiv'd.

A Book, wherein the Doctrine contain'd supplies all the necessities of the Soul, and satisfies all her desires ; for there is no question to be made, but that a Book, where our Soul, whose Desires are Infinite, finds plenary satisfaction, must be the Production of a Deity, who being only able to know what we would desire, is only able himself alone to content us.

A Book, the Doctrine of which produces such extraordinary Effects, that when it is once receiv'd into our Hearts, there is nothing able to shake our Constancy and our Faith ; no, not the most cruel of Torments.

A Book, whose Doctrine has been receiv'd into the World, maugre all the Efforts of the Devil, tho' it were only divulg'd by Fishermen and Toll-gatherers, and for Enemies met with the most Eloquent Orators, the most refin'd Philosophers, most potent Kings and Emperors, who persecuted, and put to the most cruel of Torments, those that preach'd it.

A Book, that has been confirm'd by an Infinite number of Miracles, and by the Blood of a vast number of Martyrs, of all Orders, of both Sexes, of all Conditions, of all Ages.

Lastly, *A Book*, that to this very day preserves it's pristin Veneration, tho' no endeavours have been omitted to obliterate it, while so many Works have perish'd, which one would have thought would have endur'd as long as the Sun.

If this be not the work of God, let 'em tell us, what is a Divine Book, or let 'em shew us
any

any others, wherein all these Characters meet together. But that's more then ever they will be able to do.

'Tis certain then, that God is reveal'd to Men and that this Revelation is found in the Books of the Old and New Testament.

C H A P. XII.

Of the Clearness of the Holy Scripture.

THere are some Men, who acknowledge the Divinity of the Scripture, but they say, 'tis so obscure, that no Body can discover by it, which is the true Religion; that there never was any Heretick but vaunted of the ~~drawing~~ ^{draw-} ~~from~~ ^{from} his Paradoxes, ~~upon~~ the Writings of the Prophets and Apostles. So that no Man can be confident from thence, what Religion to fix upon: because all the Religions in the World are not equally to be prov'd by the Holy Scripture. According to which Opinion we may as well say, that the Oracles of God are like those of the Sybills, and that it fares with the Holy Ghost as with the *Apella* of the Pagans, whose Answers were so obscure, that they might well be taken in two opposite Senses.

I do not, however, believe that they who are of this Opinion, will presume to maintain, that Paganism and Mahometism can be prov'd by Scripture, or that Judaism is to be found in the Books of the New Testament. And therefore they must acknowledge, that it ought not to be

an indifferent Thing to 'em, whither they be Turks, Pagans or Jews, but that they ought to embrace the Christian Religion. 'Tis one point gain'd then, that we have brought 'em to be Christians, but we must not stop there. Certainly they who assert the Scripture to be so obscure, that they cannot thereby apprehend which is the true Religion, have a strange *Idea* of God. For God has given us the Scriptures to some end : this they cannot deny, unless they will doubt of the Wisdom of the most perfect Being. This End he teaches us himself by his Servants. *All things*, says St. Paul, Rom. 15. 4. *were written for our Instruction, to the end, that through Patience and Consolation in the Holy Scriptures, we might have hope.* And the same Apostle declares, 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17. *That the whole Scripture is Divinely inspir'd, and properly for Teaching, Convincing, Correcting and Instructing according to Justice, to the end the Man of God may be accomplish'd, and perfectly instructed in every good work.* But I beseech ye, what Instruction, what Consolation can a Man receive from a Book so obscure as the Scripture, if what our *Indifferent Men* assert, be true ? Or can a work of that nature accomplish a Man of God ? 'Tis the Pleasure of God that we should have recourse to his Word, as to the Rule of our Faith and our Manners ; the Apostles Anathematize those that teach any other Doctrine, and command the Faithful not to hold communication with such sort of People, and pronounce the Peace of God upon all those that walk according to that Rule. But how is it possible that this Book can serve for a Rule, if it be so extremely obscure ?

obscure? and why should Anathema's be thunder'd out against all those that teach any of her Doctrine then what is contain'd therein, if we cannot precisely know what it is that it teaches? oth:

Either God could not clearly reveal himself to Men, or else it was not his Pleasure so to do. Can it be said, that he could not? What is Impossible to the Father and Author of Light? who himself has placed the Sun and the Stars in the Firmament, to enlighten the whole World? Can it be said, that it was not his Pleasure? How! Would not the Father of Mercy, whose Goodness is Infinite, vouchsafe to make his Will clearly known to Men, to the end they may pay him faithful Obedience? If so, wherefore does he threaten pains Eternal to those that disobey him, and believe not in his Word?

I must confess, there are many things obscurely deliver'd in Holy Scripture. It contains peculiar Depths and Mysteries. And it was the Pleasure of God it should be so, to humble our Lofly Reason pufft up with Knowledge; to waken our Minds, that fall asleep when we meet with no difficulty; to oblige us to Pray, Meditate, and Labour; make us the more earnestly wish for that day when we shall be fill'd with the knowledge of all things the most obscure. But if there be things obscure and difficult in Scripture, there are others that are most clear and easie. It proportions it self to all, and offers it self to all. There is in it a Simplicity that debases it self to the most Simple, and a Loftiness that exercises the most Learned. All indifferently drain from it; but far from being able to empty

empty it by filling our selves, we always leave behind Abysses of Knowledge and Wisdom, which we adore, without being able to comprehend 'em. Thus the Loftiness of it astonishes the Haughty; it awakes the Sloathful by the Importance of the Matter concerning which it treats; The Difficulties contain'd in it exercise the Industry, and it nourishes the Wise with its Illuminations, according to the saying of St. Austin; which is that which Saint Gregory very well explains in his Letter to the Arch-Bishop of Seville, when he sent him his Morals upon Job. As the word of God, says he, encloses Mysteries able to exercise the Wits of the most clear-sighted, so it also contains clear and evident Truths, proper to feed the simple and less Learned. Outwardly it has wherewithal to give Milk to Babes, and within her Secret Folds and Concealments sufficient to ravish with admiration the sublimest of Human Wits; like a River so shallow in some places that a Lamb may wade over, and in others deep enough for an Elephant to swim. And in the Preface to the 20th Book of his Morals, he thus expresses himself.

“ The Scripture is incomparably superior to all
 “ other Doctrine; not only for that it brings us
 “ Tidings of nothing but certain Truths; nor
 “ only because it calls us to a Heavenly Country, because it changes the Hearts of those that
 “ read it, by withdrawing 'em from Terrestrial
 “ Desires, and inflaming 'em with a Desire of
 “ Heaven; but also for that at the same time that
 “ it exercises the more Intelligent and perfect
 “ with Obscure Texts, it Cares and Comforts
 “ the more imperfect and feeble Understandings
 with

" with the sweetness and easiness of its precepts.
 " It is neither so obscure as to scare Men from
 " reading it, nor so easie to be understood, as
 " to incur Contempt. The more Familiar it is,
 " the less it disrelishes: the more Men Meditate
 " upon it, the Higher Value they put upon it.
 " It assists our Souls by the Simplicity of Words,
 " and the Sublimity of the Sence which is there-
 " in contain'd; and seems to grow and exalt it
 " self by degrees, as they that read it raise
 " themselves and grow in Understanding. So
 " that the most Ignorant, and they that have the
 " meanest parts understand something in it, and
 " the Learned always meet with Novelty. To
 which we may add what *St. Austin* says, That
 it proposes to us whatever is most necessary for
 the Conduct of our Lives; that it explains and
 illustrates it self, by expounding clearly to us in
 some parts, what it delivers but obscurely in o-
 thers. This pious Bishop every where insinuates,
 that the Scriptures manner of teaching is propor-
 tionable to all sorts of Conditions, and to the
 Understanding of Readers the most simple, and
 of meanest Capacities; that it invites all Men by
 a plain and simple Discourse to seek therein,
 wherewith to nourish themselves with apparent
 Truths; and wherewith to exercise themselves
 in the discovery of those that are conceal'd; that
 if it puts to shame the Vanity of the Haughty,
 by reason of the sublimity of it, to which they
 cannot reach; if the Depth of it affrights and
 terrifies those that strive to penetrate into it;
 it nourishes by Vertue of those Truths wherewith
 it is replenish'd, the most exalted Souls, and af-

for Children that Food which is proper for 'em, through the Familiarity wherewith it speaks.

To be convinc'd of the Clearness of the Scriptures, there needs no more then to reflect upon what is taught us therein. Does it not clearly teach us to know an Eternal God, sovereignly Good, most Wise, most Potent, and most Just, who has expanded the Heavens, and laid the Foundations of the Earth by his Almighty Power; who sustains all things by his Word, who has created Men and Angels, who preserves 'em, and and is to judge 'em? Does it not clearly shew us the profound Misery of Man, his Corruption, his Sin, his inability to free himself from the sad Condition he is in? Does it not clearly shew us what Christ has done for us, to deliver us out of this Inconvenience; how he came into the World to put on our Nature; how he dy'd for our Sins; how he rose for our Justification; how he ascended Gloriously into Heaven, to prepare a Place for us; and how he is to return to open our Tombs, and to raise us to his Eternal Sanctuary? Does it not clearly tell us what Blessings this Divine Saviour has merited for us, Pardon for our Sins, our Peace with God, the Gift of his Spirit, Salvation, Eternal Redemption, and Infinite Glory? Lastly, Does it not clearly shew us, what God requires from us, Faith, Repentance, Hope, Charity, Patience, and all those Virtues which we ought to put in Practice, and all those Vices from which we ought to abstain.

Let Men judge after all this, whether they have any reason to accuse the Holy Scriptures of Obscurity. Certainly, if there be any obscure places,

Places, it ought to be acknowledg'd, that whatever is necessary for our Knowledge is clearly explain'd. So that 'tis the same thing with the Holy Scripture as with the Book of Nature; both contain things which all the World may know; others require Application and Study; others cannot be comprehended.

But is it not true, say our *Indifferent Men*, that all Heresies may be prov'd by Scripture? I confess that the Hereticks boast their drawing their Opinions from Divine Sources; the more cunningly to deceive those that they have a mind to seduce. Such were *Arrius*, *Nestorius*, *Eutyches*, *Macedonius*, *Socinus*, and an Infinite Number of others. But tho' these Hereticks vaunted their having asserted nothing but what they extracted from Divine Writings; 'tis false that their Proofs are solid; and that they have any reason to infer from thence that the Scripture is so obscure, that all sorts of Opinions may be drawn from thence. This only ought to engage us to take all the Care imaginable to understand it aright; not to pursue our own Prejudices; not to expound the Scripture according to our own Passions. Not to read it, on purpose to pick out Opinions which we have already invented; but such as we ought to have; to examine well the Meaning of the Holy Spirit, and the end which he proposes to himself; to compare Scripture with Scripture; and not to study it with a design to set up new Opinions to signalize our selves in the World, and gain Disciples; but only with a prospect of advancing in the Knowledge of the Mysteries of our Salvation, and in the Study of Piety.

C H A P. XIII.

Against those who believe, that although the Truth be clearly explain'd in Scripture, yet that it ought to be indifferent to us what Religion we embrace.

WE have hitherto disputed against those that will not acknowledge the Divinity of Scripture, or who would make it useless to us. Now our main Business is, to contend with Those who agree, that the Truth is sufficiently explain'd in Scripture; but still they believe that we have no occasion to torment our selves about the Choice of a Religion; or at least, they live as if they believ'd so. This sort of *Indifferent Men* is very numerous; so that 'tis but just, that we should apply our selves a little to refute 'em.

I draw my first Argument against 'em from hence, that we ought always to prefer Truth before a Lye; and that we ought always to embrace that Truth, when we have once attain'd to the Knowledge of it. For if it be so, then it follows of necessity, that all Religions ought not to be Indifferent.

It will be no difficult Thing to apprehend the Force of this Inference, if it be but consider'd, that all Religions, being contrary the one to the other, and still accusing each other of Falshood, it must be necessarily concluded, that Truth is one of these Religions, and Falshood in the Rest. If then we ought to prefer Truth before Falshood, we ought to abide in that Religion where Truth shall

shall be found, and avoid all the rest as so many Sects.

This Proposition, that Truth is always to be preferr'd before Falshood, and that we ought to embrace the Truth when we have once attain'd to the Knowledge of it, seems to have no need of Proofs. For where is that Man who will presume to aver that Truth is to be preferr'd before Falshood? Had God reveal'd to us which Sect of Philosophers is the True one, there is no Person but would willingly submit. 'Tis for the finding out these Philosophical Truths, that the Learned read with so much Application what the Ancient Philosophers have written, and what the Moderns have discovered, and 'tis with that design that they make so many Experiments at this Day. Now then, if it be true in things that concern Philosophy, and which are of no use in Reference to Salvation; How much more ought we to love Truth in matters of Religion, where our Sovereign Good lies at Stake. More especially, since God has taught us what is true, what is false, what pleases, and what offends him. The Love of Truth seems to be born with us, so that even Children love it. 'Twas so highly esteemed among the Pagans, that their Authors make no Scruple to assert, that 'tis the Richest Present that God ever made Mankind; that it renders Mortals equal to God; and that if a Soul and Body were to be attributed to the Deity, Truth must be allowed him for the Soul, and Light for the Body. They also deemed themselves so Happy, when they found it out, that they offer'd Hecatombs to their Gods, to

return 'em Thanks for the Discovery of so precious a Treasure. Who would not be astonish'd then, that in the Christian World, there should be persons so daring as to maintain, that in Religion Falshood might be sometimes preferr'd before Truth, though upon all other occasions of Life they prefer Truth before Falshood, and take no delight in being deceiv'd. Their Crime is also so much the Greater, for that God is the Author of Truth, and the Devil the Father of Lyes: so that no Man can prefer Falshood before Truth, but he must prefer the Devil before God; which is not a thing to be thought of without Horror.

Our *Indifferent Men*, that very well perceive the force of this Argument, make use of all their Wit to answer it.

I. They say in the First place, that there is no Religion, which has not some Truths; and therefore They, who upon some occasions, and as their Interests require, embrace new Religions, cannot be said to embrace Falshood before Truth, because they always meet with the Choicest and most Essential Truths in all sorts of Religious Societies.

This first Answer, or rather Evasion, is very absurd; for the preferring Religions where there are some Truths, but withal very great and gross Errors, before a Religion which is pure, and which teaches us all the most necessary Truths, is a manifest preferring of a Lye before Truth; and this is that which our *Indifferent Men* do.

Now that they may see how much they are deceiv'd, I beseech 'em to consider,

I. That

1. That those Truths which are observ'd in all Religions, are stift'd in certain Sects, with an innumerable company of Errors, which are difficult to be discover'd.

2. That those General Truths, to speak properly, constitute no particular Religion.

Every Religion, if I may be permitted to say so, has a *Genus*, and a *Difference*. The *Genus* of all Religions are those principal Truths which are known to all Men, but that which makes the distinction, is either the Teaching of other Truths or Errors. So that the Principal Truths are not the Reason that a Religion is such a Religion; but either Errors, and then the Religion is false; or other Truths, which are not joyn'd to the former, and then the Religion is True. As that which makes a Man to be a Man, is not his *Animality*, or his being a Creature; that's his *Genus*: but it is his Reason which makes him a Rational Creature. So they who prefer a false Religion before a True one, cannot excuse themselves by saying, That that same very Religion has some Truths; because those Truths, as I have said already, to speak properly, constitute no Religion.

But our *Indifferent Men* will say, that if we ought always to prefer Truth before a Lye, we ought then to quit a Religion wherein we find some Errors.

I answer First, That if there be any Religion purer than that which we profess, we ought not to be ashamed of quitting our Religion, to embrace another. But in the second place, I say, we ought to distinguish between the Errors. There are some which are Capital and Mortal,

which creep into our Worship and our Manners ; which discompose and overturn the very foundations of Christianity ; but there are others which are not altogether incompatible with Piety ; as there are likewise two sorts of Truths ; the one which are of highest importance, of which we cannot be ignorant and yet be Sav'd ; others which are not so necessary ; so that without the knowledge thereof, we may one day obtain Salvation. 'Tis certain, that we ought to abandon a Communion, which destroys Essentially the Service of God, and which continues obstinate in Errors, directly opposite to the Salvation of Mankind. But we may be stedfast to a Religion wherein are only some scatter'd Errors of small Importance, contenting our selves with not approving those Errors ; as in civil Society we refrain from Familiarity with those persons whom we find to be notoriously vicious, because that a Correspondency with such persons would be a stain to those that make Profession of Honour and Virtue. But with all mildness we bear with the defects of those persons, who not being universally wicked, retain the Tinctures only of Human frailty.

2. In the second place they say, that we ought to prefer Truth before a Lye, but that we ought to prefer Peace before Truth. This is an Evassion that meets with no better luck then the former ? 'Tis true that God loves Peace, but such a Peace as is conjoyn'd with Truth, because he is no less the God of Truth, then the God of Peace, and for that Peace without Truth is a conspiracy against God ; so that War is to be preferr'd

preferr'd before a Peace that separates us from
 God. This is no more then what the Pagans
 themselves acknowledg'd ; and if they have said
 that Peace is the most excellent Thing in the
 World ; they have likewise asserted, that we
 ought never to commit an unjust or base Act for
 the enjoyment of it. The love of Peace ought
 only to encline us to tolerate those Correspon-
 dences that are not guilty of Capital Errors, and
 such as are incompatible with our Salvation. And
 therefore we cannot consent with those ancient
 Authors, who made such a noise about Innocent
 Opinions, as if they had overturn'd all Christi-
 anity. As *Philastrus*, who lookt upon those as
 very great Hereticks, who attributed the Epistle
 to the *Hebrews* to *St. Clement* and *St. Barnabas*,
 and not to *St. Paul* ; and those who did not be-
 lieve that *David* compos'd the 150 *Psalms*. We
 cannot approve *Pope Victor*, who for a Petty
 Question excommunicated the Churches of *Asia*,
 by that means dismembring the Great and Glo-
 rious Body of Jesus Christ ; which was very well
 represented to him by *Irenaeus* ; and we believe,
 as that Bishop did, that for the sake of Peace it
 is much better to bear with the petty defects of
 the Church, then to violate the Peace of it by
 correcting the Church ; in regard the Mischief
 of the Rupture is incomparably much greater
 then the Fruit which is to be reap'd from the
 Censure of such an Error. But the love of Peace
 ought never to oblige us to prefer Communions,
 full of Errors, before another which is much
 more pure ; because nothing ought to be dearer
 to us then Truth, and for that we ought always

to remember what *St. Paul* says, that we never ought to do Evil that Good may come of it. To which we may add, That Truth of it self is not contrary to Peace, and that it is only by Accident, that it is the occasion of Wars and Commotions. 'Tis not Truth, but the Corruption of Men, which causes War, and is the Fuel of Discord.

3. They will say in the Third Place, that God always Pardons the Good Intention, and therefore he will not deny Salvation to those who prefer Peace before Truth, because they think they please God in doing so. This Third Objection is refuted very easily by the same Scripture, which teaches us, that a Good Intention is not sufficient to justify our Actions before God, when we do that which he has forbid us to do. And to be convinc'd of this, there needs no more then to read the History of *Saul*. God had commanded him to exterminate the *Amalekites* in such a manner as he enjoyn'd him: Nevertheless he spar'd the best of the Oxen, and the best of the Sheep to Sacrifice to the Lord. One would have thought there had been nothing blame-worthy in this Action. Nevertheless, *Samuel* gives him a terrible Reprimand. *Has the Lord, said He, as great delight in Burnt Offerings and Sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, then the fat of Rams. For Rebellion is the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as Iniquity and Idolatry; because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejecte'd Thee from being King.* Thus you see how his good Intention was rewarded. To this we may

may add the History recited in the 1st of *Kings* chap. 13. A man of God was sent to *Bethel* to prophetic against the Altar of *Jeroboam*; He performed exactly the Command which had been given him; and because that God had forbid him to eat and drink in that Country, he would not enter into *Jeroboam's* Palace. But meeting an old Prophet in his return, who assur'd him that an Angel had commanded him from the Eternal, to carry him back to his House, and to give him to eat, the Man of God suffered himself to be over-rul'd, and went and Din'd with the Prophet. He thought that that was no violation of the First Order he had receiv'd, because he made no question of the Truth of what was told him: His Intention was only to obey the Eternal. Nevertheless, God call'd this Action Rebellion; and at the same moment caus'd the Old Prophet, that had brought him back, to pronounce to him the Sentence of his Death, which was afterwards executed by a Lyon. To teach us, not only that there is no Authority which ought to oblige us to violate the Commands of God, but also, that our Good Intentions are not sufficient for our Justification. The History of *Uzzah* describ'd, *Sam.* 2. 6, confirms the same Truth. This Man, seeing that the Oxen that drew the Ark, drew it all a one side, and fearing that August Symbol of the Presence of God should fall, stretch'd forth his Hand to hold it. There is no question to be made, but that his Intention was Good. Nevertheless God smote him, and he dy'd upon the spot, because that none but the Priests and Levites were to touch the Ark. After

all

all this, let our *Indifferent Men* flatter themselves with their good Intentions. The Jews believ'd they offer'd a pleasing sacrifice to God, in putting the Christians to Death. But can it be imagin'd, that their good Intentions were acceptable to God? Saint Paul's Intention was good when he persecuted the Church; but was that Intention sufficient to justify him? He does not think so himself, since he acknowledges his Sin, and Confesses that if God had given him Grace, 'twas the most Illustrious Proof of his Clemency. 1 Tim. i.

C H A P. XIV.

Three Arguments against the Indifferent-Men.

I Draw a Second Argument against those who defend Indifferency of Religions from hence, that the Scripture causes us to look upon it as a great Crime, for a Man to abandon a Truth to the knowledge of which he has once attain'd; and as a Crime that ought to be severely punish'd. For it would never speak in that manner if it were true, that it was lawful to Sacrifice Truth for Peace. There needs no more then to read the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Chap. 6. v. 4, 5, 6. For is it possible for those who were once enlighten'd, and have tasted of the Heavenly Gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the Good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come; If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto Repentance: Seeing

Seeing they Crucifie to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame. Can People be painted out in blacker Colours then to compare em with those that Crucify the Son of God? They are also much more to be blam'd; for they who Nail'd to the Cross the Saviour of the World, had no knowledge of him; but these Men Crucifie him, well knowing who he is. The first put him to Death in Mortal Flesh, but the Second Crucifie him in Glory and Immortality. The Apostle shews us yet more clearly the Enormity of their Sin, and the punishment which they deserve in the Tenth Chapter of the same Epistle. For if we Sin, says he, wilfully, after we have receiv'd the Knowledge of the Truth, there remains no more sacrifice for Sins; but a certain fearful looking for Judgment, and fiery Indignation which shall devour the Adversaries. He that despis'd Moses's Law died without Mercy, under two or three Witnesses. Of how much surer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the Blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctify'd, an unholy Thing, and has done despite to the Spirit of Grace? For we know him that has said, Vengeance belongs unto Me, and I will recompence saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall Judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the Living God. Is it possible that St. Paul should thus discourse, if there were any Reasons to induce a Man to forsake the Truth, without stirring, and without being afraid of the Judgments of God.

But

But because the Apostle speaks here of those that quit the Truth voluntarily, and for that perhaps it may be thought, that he discourges not here of those who forsake the Religion which they think most pure, to avoid the Mischiefs they might suffer by it, but only of those who quit their Religion without any Necessity, there needs no more then to read the following Verses, where he exhorts the Faithful Hebrews to suffer as they had done, rather then renounce the Truth; *But call to remembrance the former days, in which after ye were Illuminated ye endured a great sight of Afflictions; Partly while ye were made a Gazing-Stock, both by reproaches and Afflictions, and partly while ye became the Companions of them that were so us'd. Cast not away therefore your Confidence, which has great Recompence of reward. For ye have need of Patience, &c.*

Which gives me an occasion to proceed to a Second proof which confirms what we have said, and is taken from the Exhortations of Scripture to die for the Truth. In a word, it would be a great piece of cruelty, to impose upon Men a Yoak so heavy, without any necessity, and to engage 'em to suffer all sorts of Cruelties rather then renounce the Truth, if it might be sometimes abandon'd without a Crime. The Life of Men who are made after the Image of God, and who have been redeem'd by the Blood of his Son, is it so meanly to be priz'd, that they should be oblig'd to expose it without Compulsive Reasons? How comes it then to pass, that Christ exhorts us so often to carry his Cross? Whence proceeds it that it is the First Lesson that he gives

gives his Disciples. *If any one will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me. Mat. 16. 24. And he that taketh not his Cross, and follows after me, is not worthy of me. He that finds his Life shall lose it; and he that loses his Life for my sake, shall find it, Mat. 10. v. 38, 39.* Whence comes it that the Apostles so often repeat the same Exhortation? Wherefore do they command us to bear the Reproach of Christ, and to follow the Examples of those that were Ston'd, Saw'd, or slain by the Sword, who have wander'd in Desarts, upon Mountains, and lurk'd in Dens and Caverns of the Earth? Would Wise Men, and inspir'd by God, speak thus, were it an Indifferent Thing what Religion a Man profess'd?

To this Argument I shall add another which is taken from a Passage in *St. Paul*, where that same Doctor of the Gentiles pronounces Anathema's upon all those that should preach any other Gospel than that which he had preach'd himself, though he should be another *St. Paul* descended from Heaven, and one of those Blessed Spirits that continually behold the Face of God. *But though We, or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel unto ye, then that ye have received, let him be accursed, Gal. 1. 8.* Certainly, Light is not more opposite to Darkness, then the words of *St. Paul*, are contrary to the Opinions of those against whom we dispute. The Apostle anathematizes those that preach any other Gospel but that which he has taught. Yet they with whom we dispute, judge it to be an Indifferent Thing, and of no Importance to embrace a Religion which

which teaches another Doctrine, then that which *St. Paul* has taught. This Argument is so much the stronger, because the Apostle thunders out his Curse against people, who only went about to joyn the Religion of Christ to that of *Moses*. Wherein they were far less Culpable then our *Indifferent Men*, who would not only joyn *Moses* with Christ, but Jesus Christ with the World; the Religion of Jesus Christ with other Religions, which are no more then Human Inventions, and make it their business to serve God and *Mammon*.

Nor can I forbear to observe in this Place, that this Passage absolutely overturns the Opinion of those who imagine, that 'tis enough to believe that Jesus Christ is the promised *Messiah*, and to admit of those Truths which are common to all Religions; but that other Things are not of any great Importance; and that there is no necessity of disputing upon that point. For they who are rebuk'd by *St. Paul* acknowledged *Jesus* for the *Messiah*, they also confess'd the most Eminent Truths of the Gospel, but he could not persuade 'em altogether to renounce *Moses*, and to lay aside Circumcision. Nevertheless, they are Anathematized by *St. Paul*. Judge then what Anathema's that Great Apostle would now thunder out, were he to descend from Heaven. Besides, that it might be easie to prove, that should we grant, what is far from us to do, that it is sufficient to believe that Christ is the Promised *Messiah*, whom the Prophets call the Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Eternal of Justice, it would follow from thence, that there are Religions which would be

be thought to be Christians, which are False Religions, and which we cannot embrace without offending God.

CHAP. XV.

Against those who believe they make Profession of a Religion, though they believe it to be false.

THE Greatest part of our Indifferent Men believe, that without committing any Crime, they may observe the Ceremonies, and practise the Worship of a False Religion ; that the World may be brought to an Agreement with Jesus Christ, and that both the one and the other may be serv'd at the same Time ; like that same Emperor who had in his Cloister the Images of Jesus Christ, *Abraham*, *Orpheus*, and *Apollonius* : Or rather like those, (of whom *Adrian* speaks in a Letter to *Servianus*, cited by *Vopiscus*) who called themselves Bishops of Jesus Christ, and served the God *Serapis*. This Opinion is dangerous, tho' easie to be refuted, and no less easie to shew that Dissimulation in Religion deserves Rebuke and Censure ; and that it is Condemned by all the Sacred Writers.

I. If it were Lawful to dissemble and conceal our thoughts concerning Religion, how comes it to pass, that in the Reign of *Abab* and *Jezebel*, God owns none for his Servants, but such as had not bowed their Knee to *Baal*, tho' there be no question to be made, but that several of those who prostrated themselves before that Idol,

Idol, ador'd in their Hearts the True God of Israel ?

II. Wherefore Jesus Christ declares expressly, that we cannot be of the Number of his Sheep, and follow Strangers, *John 10. 4, 5. And when he putteth forth his own Sheep, he goeth before them, and the Sheep follow him ; for they know his Voice ; But a Stranger will not follow, but fly from him ; for they know not the Voice of Strangers.*

III. Whence it comes to pass, that this Divine Saviour teaches us, *Mat. 6. 24. That we cannot serve two Masters.*

IV. Wherefore does he expressly forbid us to deny him before Men. *Mat. 10. 33. Had it not been sufficient for him to have said, Who shall deny me in his Heart ? Why does he express himself so peremptorily, Whoever shall deny me before Men, &c. Who shall be ashamed of Me, of him will I be ashamed.* This is one of those Passages that *Avitus* made use of against *Gandebaud*, who made profession of *Arrianism*, tho' he acknowledged Jesus Christ for a God.

V. Whence comes it to pass, that Jesus Christ, if we desire to be his Disciples, requires of us that we should renounce and forsake our Worldly Possessions, and break the strictest Tyes of Nature that unite us with our Nearest Relations *Luke 14. 26. If any one comes to me, and hate not his Father and Mother, Wife and Children, Brethren and Sisters, yea and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple. And v. 33. So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all he hath he cannot be my Disciple.*

VI. Wherefore *St. Paul* calls those Idolaters who committed any one of those Acts which the Pagans practis'd, *1. Corinth. 10.*

VII. If it be sufficient for a Man to believe in his Heart, without making open Profession of the Truth, how comes it that the same Apostle Commands us, *to believe in our Hearts, and make Confession with our Mouths unto Salvation, Rom. 10. 9, 10.* And that *St. Peter* would have us *Be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asks ye a Reason of the Hope that is in you. 1. Pet. 3. 15.*

VIII. If it be true that Man may be faithful and practise a False worship, and observe the Ceremonies of a Corrupt Religion, then *might He Drink the Cup of the Lord, and the Cup of Devils,* contrary to the saying of *St. Paul, 1. Cor. 10.* and have Communion with God, yet walk in Darkness, contrary to the Precepts of *St. John 1 Epist. C. 1. v. 6.* And a Man may have received the Good Seed of God into his Heart, and withdraw himself in time of Persecution, contrary to the Doctrine of Christ, *Mat. 13.*

IX. A Man might be an Idolater and yet be Saved, contrary to what the Apostle determines, *1 Cor. 6. that Idolaters shall not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.*

X. He may be register'd in the Book of Life of the Lamb, and adore the Beast, contrary to what is written by *St. John, Apoc. 13. 8. And all that shall Worship the Beast, whose Names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb.*

XI. If the Opinion of those, against whom we Combat, were true, would *St. John* threaten Eternal Torments to the Adorers of the Beast?

Apoc.

Apoc. 14. v. 9, 10, 11. If any Man worship the Beast and his Image, and receive his mark in his Forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink the Wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the Cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented with Fire and Brimstone, in the Presence of the Holy Angels, and in the Presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, &c.

XII. The same beloved Disciple would have placed the *Fearful* at the head of those for whom the Lake of Fire and Brimstone is reserved. *Apoc. 21. 8.* Would Jesus Christ threaten to spue the *Lukewarm* out of his Mouth, *Apoc. 3. 16.* For who are the *Fearful* and *Lukewarm*, but they who understand the Truth, yet fearing the Harred and Cruelty of the World, compose their outward Behaviour in such a manner, that they make a shew of approving a Religion, of which they acknowledge the Falshood. Such as have an Orthodox Soul, and Lips of Infidels; who will neither be altogether for Jesus Christ, nor altogether for the World; who divide themselves between the One and the Other, and would fain be reconcil'd to Both: In a word, who do that which our *Indifferent Men* believe may be done without a Crime.

XIII. Whence comes it to pass, that the Holy Ghost condemns those that halt on both sides, *1 Kings 18. 21. Zephani. 1. 5.* and those that worship and swear by the Lord, yet swear by *Mahom* also.

XIV. Wherefore is it, that the Two Apostles *St. Paul* and *St. John*; of which the one had been

been taken up into Heaven; the Other had seen in the Spirit the Heavenly Jerusalem, Commands us to come out from among the Unfaithful, and from Babylon, Apoc. 18. 4. Long out of her my People, says the Lord by St. John, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that we receive not of her Plagues: and 2 Cor. 6. 14, 15, 16, 17. Be ye not unequally yoked with Unbelievers; for what fellowship hath Righteousness with Unrighteousness? and what Communion hath Light with Darkness? What Concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believes with an Infidel? What Agreement has the Temple of God with Idols? For ye are the Temple of the Living God, &c. Wherefore come out from among 'em, and be ye separate, says the Lord, and touch not the Unclean thing, and I will receive ye.

XV. Lastly, Wherefore is it, that we are commanded to suffer for Righteousness sake, and that the Spirit of God makes such large Promises to those that suffer Persecution, *Matth. 5. 10. Heb. 12. James 5. 10. 11. Phil. 1. 29. 2 Tim. 2. 11, 12.*

I add to all these Proofs, those Passages of Scripture, where the Apostles command us to offer to God not only our Souls but our Bodies also: and to Glorify him in our Bodies and our Spirit. *Rom. 12. 1. I beseech you therefore, Brethren, that ye present your Bodies a living sacrifice holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. and 1 Cor. 6. 20. For ye are bought with price, therefore Glorify God in your Body, and in your Spirit, which are Gods. Is it not a great piece of Sacrilege to refuse the giving of that to God*

God which belongs to him. He created both our Bodies and Souls, he has redeem'd 'em both, the one in the other ; Is it not then just, that we should consecrate both to him ? Wherefore should we separate what God has joyn'd, and what he has given us, to the end we should employ it to his Glory ? How great a sin it is, how great a piece of Impiety, to divide our selves between God, to whom we owe all things, and the World to which we owe nothing ? To deny our Tongues to God, to whom we owe our Lives ; and to be asham'd of calling our selves the Servants and Disciples of Christ, who was not asham'd to call us his Brethren, and who for our sakes has suffer'd a most cruel and ignominious death.

To demonstrate yet more clearly the Falshood of this Opinion, which I labour to destroy, I think it convenient to make these few Reflexions.

The First is, That it is a strange thing, that there should be so many People that make no scruple of Lying in Religion, which is a thing of the greatest Importance, and the most Sacred in the World ; in regard that Lying is a Vice unworthy a Man of Honour. The greatest Debauchees become sensible of the things of Conscience, if they happen to swear a Falshood before a Judge ; So true it is, that we have a natural Aversion against telling a Lye. Who would not wonder then, that Men who are desirous of Reputation, should not be asham'd to lye in a thing that is most grave and serious in the World ; the Concern of God himself, of Truth and our own Salvation. If a Subject, who gives but the
least

least suspicion of an Intention to Revolt from his Prince, and who only lets fall some words that will admit of a bad Construction, is handl'd with so much severity, in regard that Royal Majesty is so Sacred, that it is not to be injur'd in any manner whatever, without incurring the guilt of a hainous Crime; What greater Transgression can a Man commit, then to make a shew of being an Enemy to God and his Truth? What Torments ought not they to expect, who are guilty of such Impiety?

The Second Reflexion is this, That they who dissemble in Religion, commit a very great crime against their Brethren, for they incite 'em by their own example to Apostacy, and make 'em believe, that the Religion which they profess is the true Religion. So that if they who poison the Body, are lookt upon as the wicked'st People in the World; How much more criminal are they who poison the Soul; who present their Brethren the Mortal Draught, and make a shew of Drinking it. to the end, that others may not be afraid of swallowing it? And what Torments ought not they to fear from Him who threatens to punish most severely Lyers, and such as give scandal to his little Children.

This Remark is so much the more necessary because there are several Persons who believe, that a Man may abide in a false Religion, with a design to make known the Truth to those who know it not, wherein they grossly abuse themselves. For besides that, I would willingly ask 'em, whether they can speak it with a safe Conscience; that they only stick to the false Religion
which

which they profess, on purpose to shew the falshood of it, and whether it be not meerly because they find it more advantageous for their Business, and for the enjoyment of the Conveniencies of Life; I would put this farther question to 'em, were the First of these the real Motive that detains 'em, Who is he that has enjoyn'd 'em to extend their Charity so far as to expose themselves willingly to Damnation, out of hopes to convert others? For where is it that God has promis'd to Save those who shall turn Idolaters to Save their Brethren? Does not *St. Paul* expressly say, That we ought not to do evil, that good may come of it? But so far are they from Converting others by adhering to a false Religion, that quite the contrary, they confirm 'em in their own Opinion, and corrupt many by their bad Example. They may make good Hypocrites like themselves, but very rarely good Christians.

The Third Reflexion which I add to the two preceding is this, That if Dissimulation in Religion be permitted, and that it be lawful to embrace that which best agrees with our carnal Interests, we must confess, that the Martyrs who have laid down their Lives with so much Courage, and suffered such cruel Torments, were all Fools and Madmen; while they rather chose to lose their Lives, when there was no necessity for it, and perish in the midst of consuming Flames, then to condescend to the least compliance, tho' but in outward shew, and buckle to their Persecutors. But God forbid we should deprive those Christian Hero's of their merited Honour

Honour, and look upon as extravagant, the wisest of all Mortals. Have we not more reason to call our *Lukewarm*, and our fearful Christians Fools, who rather chuse to preserve their Wealth and Worldly Advantages, then one day to enjoy those Eternal Felicities which God prepares for those that will be faithful to him; who are more afraid of the present then the future; of that which can Kill the Body, then of that which precipitates the Soul into Hell: who are more afraid of Death, then of the cruel Torments of Hell; who prefer the World before God, and Time before Eternity.

To these Three Reflexions I shall add a Fourth, which seems to me to be of great Importance, that the Inside can never be good, when the Outside is evil. And that it is not possible for a Man to deny God with his Lips, but he must renounce him in his Heart, when he has had time to reflect upon what he has done. I say, when he has had time to consider with himself, that I may not oppose the Example of *St. Peter*, whose Fears so far disturb'd his Mind, that, quite transported beyond himself, and only studying which way to avoid the danger that threatned him, he neither remembred Jesus Christ, nor the Promise which he had made him.

'Twill be no difficult thing to understand this 4th Reflexion, if we consider that 'tis in the Heart that Men take that unhappy and cursed Resolution to renounce Jesus Christ with their Lips, and that 'tis in their Hearts that they meditate an Accommodation with the present Time. 'Tis therefore to no purpose for 'em to say, that they

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reserve their Hearts for God, and that they surrender 'em entirely to him, tho' they forsake his Truth; that they do not renounce him with their Hearts, altho' they deny him with their Lips. To talk in this manner is to deceive themselves; and they who discourse after this manner, are like a Woman, that should say, she had bequeath'd her Heart to her Husband, and only made her Body common to her Lovers: Or to a Man that should rend the Reputation of his Neighbor, or Murder him, yet pretend that in his Heart he abhorr'd Murder, Backbiting and Calumny, and that he tenderly lov'd the Person whom he had bereft of Life.

They who dissemble cannot deny but that the motions of Self-Love prevail over the Impulses of the Love of God, because they will neither sacrifice their Wealth, nor their Ease to his Glory. So that if they were always to be judg'd by the Sentiments of their Hearts, they would always deserve no less then Condemnation and Death.

C H A P. XVI.

An Answer to some Objections.

IS but reasonable now to Answer some Objections which they make us.

The First is drawn from that which Jesus Christ says, *John 4. 24. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and Truth.* Therefore, say they, God is satisfy'd with

with the Heart, and with the inside Worship, not requiring exterior Adoration.

But if this be the Consequence which is to be drawn from the words of the Saviour of the World, Why does he exhort us to own him before Men, to bear his Cross, and to suffer for him? Certainly, if he required no more then the Heart, wherefore does he exact from us an outward Profession, which exposes us to a Thousand Disgraces, and a Thousand Sufferings? Is our Life of so little value, that he would have us to be so prodigal of it, when there is no occasion? But what Man of Judgement is there, who does not perceive, that his meaning is only to shew us, what sort of Worship is most pleasing to God, and that it his pleasure, that under the Gospel we should pay him a Spiritual Worship, abstracted from Matter, and all those Observances which were only proper for the Infancy of the Church; independant from Circumstances of Time, Persons and Places? Whether it be, that God, filling all the World with the Immensity of his Being, is no longer to be Ador'd at *Jerusalem* or *Guerezin* only; or whether it be, that, being a Spirit, he is not rightly Honour'd by the Oblations of Bulls and Goats. He neither eats their Flesh nor drinks their Blood; or whether it be, that which way soever you look upon these sorts of Worship, they have no Relation or Correspondence, nor any way sute with the nature of God; and to speak properly, are no more then shadows or Types of the True Worship which God requires. This is the Sence of these words; and there needs no more to be

convinc'd of it then to read what goes before. But we must not conclude from thence that God is satisfy'd with the Adoration of the Heart, while the Body lies prostrate at the Feet of a false Deity. This is not a Worshipping God in Truth, but a Dividing his Adoration, by bequeathing the Inward worship to God, and the outward Reverence to some other Object. For Truth is no other then the Conformity of Outside and Inside. He that has the Outward Formality without the Inward Sincerity is a Hypocrite ; and he who says he has the Inward without the Exterieur Reality is a Lyer.

The Second Objection is drawn from what St. Paul says in his Epistle to the Romans, Chap. 14. v. 22. *Hast thou Faith, have it to thy self before God.*

But there needs no more then to read that Passage with attention, and to examine what obliged the Apostle to hold that Argument, for any Man to apprehend, that he speaks, there, of the Belief and Faith of a Believer, that Jesus Christ has set us at full Liberty ; that he has abolish'd the distinction of Days and Meats, that was observed under the Old Covenant. St. Paul therefore means, that if we find our selves in Company with weak People, who would be scandalized to see us take our full Liberty, it would be better to abstain from the Use of those things which God has permitted us, to reserve our Faith to our selves, then to give any Scandal : Because the Dispute was only concerning Indifferent things ; and for that whether we Eat or Eat not, we commit no Sin. But are we thence

to conclude, that the same Conduct is to be observ'd in Things, the use of which is so far from being Indifferent, that it is absolutely necessary; and such as Jesus Christ recommends to us with so much Care; threatening us, withal, with Eternal Punishment if we neglect 'em. If that Consequence were to be drawn from the words of St. Paul, how comes it to pass that he exhorts us to make Confession with our Mouths unto Salvation, and to lay down our Lives for the Gospel? Certainly if it were sufficient to have faith in the heart, there would be no necessity of doing good Works. Contrary to the saying of St. James, c. 2. v. 14. *What doth it profit, my Brethren, though a Man say he hath Faith, and hath not Works? can faith save him?* I can hardly think it worth while to refute here the Argument which they draw from another Passage of St. Paul, where he exhorts that Men should make Supplications in all places. For he must be blind who understands not, that the Aim of S. Paul is only to oppose those Persons, who thought the Virtue and Efficacy of Prayers depended upon the Quality of the Place where they were made. It was a general Error of the Pagans, and the People of *Israel* made a Great Distinction between Places; in pursuance of what God had said, that he would make choice of one certain place to fix his Name there. The design of St. Paul therefore is to teach us, that Jesus Christ had abolished the Mosaic Pedantism; that there was no longer any distinction to be made of Places for Divine Worship, in regard there was no Corner of the World that was not fill'd with the

Presence of God, and where he did not favourably hear our Vows. But so far was he from pretending that it should be inferr'd from thence, that he forbids all Communion with Idolaters.

The third Objection is taken from the 6th Chapter of *Baruch*, v. 5. and from a Letter which they pretend that *Jeremy* wrote to those that were to be carried away Captive to *Babylon*.
 " When you shall be enter'd into *Babylon*, you
 " shall remain there several Years, and a long
 " time, even till Seven Generations: Neverthe-
 " less after that, I will bring ye back in peace.
 " Now you shall see at *Babylon* Gods of Silver
 " and Wood which shall be carried upon Mens
 " Shoulders, and which shall terrifie the Nations.
 " Take heed that ye become not in any manner
 " like those Strangers, and that ye be not seiz'd
 " with the fear of those Gods, when you shall
 " behold the People before and behind, that shall
 " adore 'em; but say in your hearts, Lord, it
 " is thou alone that art to be ador'd.

In answer to this Argument, I will not examine whether the Book be Canonical or no; tho' all Men agree, that the Jews never look'd upon it to be Authentick. That *Meliton*, *Origen*, *St. Hilary*, *Gregory Nazianzene*, and *Epiphanius*, make no mention of it, and that *St. Jerome* expressly rejects it, in his Preface upon *Jeremy*. 'Tis not my business here to discuss that Question, any farther then as it contributes to refute the Mistake of our Adversaries. For it says expressly, *Take heed of Conforming in any manner whatever to Strangers.* Would he have troubled

bled himself with any such Exhortation, had it been lawful for the People without offending God, to prostrate themselves before the Gods of Gold and Silver, only saying in their Hearts, Lord, it is thou alone who art to be ador'd? The enjoyning us to say in our Hearts, that God is only to be ador'd, is that a Permission to Worship any other but Him? And the Prostrating our selves before an Idol, only saying what *Jeremy* commands us, is not that a Perfect Condemnation of our selves? The Meaning therefore of that Holy Prophet is only to instruct us, that when we behold Idolaters Worshipping a Counterfeit Deity, if it be not convenient boldly to Rebuke their Idolatry, for fear of raising Sedition, it behoves us at least to Condemn it in our Hearts, without imitating their Conduct, or the practise of those who behold with delight the Pomp and Magnificence of Idolatrous Worship.

Lastly, They make use of what *St. Peter* said to *Cornelius*, and which we read in the 10th Chapter of the *Acts*. *Of a Truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of Persons; But in every Nation he that feareth him and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him.* But that Man must very unfortunately deceive himself, who sees not that *St. Peter* means no other Thing, but that he perceived that Salvation was no longer peculiar to the Nation of the Jews; that it was no longer Necessary to be of the Posterity of *Jacob* according to the Flesh, for a Man to be accepted with God; and that there was no longer

any Distinction between the *Jew* and the *Greek*, the *Scythian* and the *Barbarian*.

This is the sense of those Words. But it is not to be thence inferr'd, that a Man may be accepted with God, let him be of what Religion he pleases. Had *St. Peter* had any such thought, would he have taken so much pains to Convert People to Christianity? Or have expos'd himself to the ill will of his whole Nation. *Saint Paul* holds the same Argument as *Saint Peter*, *Rom. 10. v. 12, 13.* but he had said before, that with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation.

C H A P. XVII.

An Answer to the Examples brought from Nicodemus, Naaman, and St. Paul.

WE have seen the Passages of which our *Indifferent Men* make use; now let us examine the Examples which they bring.

1. They propose to us the Examples of *Zachary*, *Elizabeth*, *Simeon*, *St. John Baptist*, the Blessed *Virgin*, and *Christ* himself, who often intermix'd themselves with the Congregations of the *Jews*, tho' they were very Corrupt, and observed the Ceremonies of the Law. But it is apparent that these Examples prove nothing of what they pretend to. I confess, that *Zachary*, that *Elizabeth*, &c. intermix'd themselves with the Assemblies of the *Jews*, because it was the will of God that they should pay him their Homage due in his Temple,

ple, and that there was no command as yet to separate from the Communion of the Jews. They observ'd the Ceremonies of the Law, because those Ceremonies were not then abolished. Jesus Christ was not yet ascended into Heaven. Then wherefore should they not intermix themselves in the Assemblies of the Jews? The Law of *Moses* was there read every Sabbath-Day; they read the Prophets; they offer'd the Sacrifices which God had ordain'd; there was no Idolatry in the Worship; they ador'd no other God there but the God of *Israel*. The Scribes and Pharisees constrain'd no Body to believe their Expositions of the Law: They could distinguish the wholesome true Doctrine from the Traditions of False Teachers, and beware of their Leav'n, as Christ exhorted his Disciples. Let 'em now examine what reason they have to bring these Examples.

2. They propose to us the Example of *Nicodemus*, who tho' he were thoroughly convinc'd of the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, durst not give him a visit in Publick, for fear of being expell'd the Synagogue; and the same thing is reported of *Joseph of Arimathea*.

Now upon this Example I observe three things. The First is, that tho' *Nicodemus*, and *Joseph of Arimathea* did not openly take the Part of Jesus Christ, yet they never intermixed in any Society which God had forbid 'em.

The Second thing is, that *Nicodemus*, *Joseph*, and others, who did as they did; are extremely blam'd in Scripture, *John* 12. 42. Nevertheless among the Chief Rulers also many believ'd in him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him,

lest they should be put out of the Synagogue ; for they loved the Praise of Men more then the Praise of God.

The Third thing is, that *Nicodemus* opposed the Resolution which the Pharisees took against Jesus Christ ; that *Joseph* would never give his consent ; and that both the one and the other, no longer dissembling their Thoughts, at a Time when the Apostles themselves forsook Christ, and that the one deny'd him, the other had betray'd him, openly demanded his Body, and caused it to be honourably buried ; having the Courage to confess him Dead, whom they durst not confess when he was alive.

After these three Remarks, let us compare our *Indifferent Men* with those Illustrious Jews. *Nicodemus* never intermix'd with any forbidden Assembly. Our *Indifferent Men* believe they may do so, and yet commit no Crime. *Nicodemus* and *Joseph* bestow'd a Publick Funeral upon our Lord Jesus, and opposed the Counsels which the Pharisees took together in Combination against him. But our *Indifferent Men* are asham'd to speak for the Truth, or to uphold the Cause of Jesus Christ.

So that if *Nicodemus* and *Joseph* are blam'd by *St. John*, at a time when they durst not openly confess Jesus Christ, judge how much more Criminal our false *Nicodemites* are, whose knowledge is much greater then that of the Jews.

They Object in the Third Place, the Example of *Neaman* the Syrian, who understanding the True God, forbore not however from entering into the Temple of *Rimmon*, when his Master went thither to pay his Devotions ; and they pretend

pretend that *Elisba* the Prophet gave him leave to comply with the King's Worship in Prostrating himself as he did.

In Answer to this Example, I make these Reflexions following,

1. That *Naaman* never demanded of the Prophet that he might be permitted to dissemble his Religion before the King of *Syria*. On the other side he vow'd, and promised that he would Sacrifice to no other Deity but the Eternal God, 2 Kings, 5, 17. *Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy Servant two Mules Burthen of Earth? For thy Servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-Offering, nor Sacrifice unto any other Gods, but unto the Lord.*

The Second Reflexion is, that *Naaman* made but only one Request; not to enter into the Temple of *Rimmon* when he pleased, for that had been a piece of Impiety; but only that it might not be imputed to him for a Crime if he bow'd in the House of *Rimmon*, when his Master went to Worship there, and lean'd on his hand.

These two Reflexions already shew the Difference between the Conduct of our Indifferent Men, and that of *Naaman*. *Naaman* openly declared, that he served the God of *Israel*, and that he would serve none but him. And there is no doubt but that he protested the same thing to his Master, when he related to him the Miracle of his Cure. But our Indifferent Men believe, that for their better Security, they may profess the same Religion with Idolaters; and by consequence may have another Object of their Worship then God, when they are among People who believe

believe that another sort of Religious worship may be paid to any other Deity. *Naaman* only desired that he might be permitted to serve his Master as he was bound in duty to do; but our *Indifferent Men* require, that they may be permitted to dissemble without any other reason then for their own Convenience and Profit.

Naaman is extreamly troubled in Conscience about paying this Civil Service to his Master, and begs Pardon of God, as being afraid of committing a Sin. His Conscience had such an Abhorrency of Idolatry, that he could not brook any thing which had the least Affinity with it. But our *Indifferent Men* make no scruple to give themselves that Liberty which he denied himself, and believe they may do that without offending God, which *Naaman* never did; tho' *Naaman* was bred up in Idolatry, and had no other Instruction then what he received from his Cure; whereas our Antagonists clearly know the will of God; which will not permit us to doubt, but that *Naaman* will rise up in Judgment against 'em, and that they will undergo severe Punishment.

But in regard our *Indifferent Men* insist very much upon *Naaman's* desiring that God would pardon him, if he prostrated himself in the Temple of *Rimmon*, when the King his Master lean'd upon his Hand, and upon *Elisha's* answering him, *go in Peace*; as if by those words he gave him leave to do as he desired, 'tis necessary to observe in this Place,

1. That the Terms in the Original may be understood, as if *Naaman*, after he had made a Vow,

Vow, never from thence forward to Worship or serve any other then the True God, had deliver'd himself in this manner. *I beg of the Lord to pardon this thy Servant, That when my Master enter'd into the House of Rimmon to prostrate himself there, and that when he lean'd upon my Hand, I also prostrated my self; for that I say, let the Lord pardon me.* Reading it in this manner, there is nothing of Difficulty in the Story; in regard that according to this Version, he begs Pardon for what is pass'd, but not for what is to come.

2. That *Elisba* by those Words, *go in Peace*, gave no Permission to *Naaman*; he only dismiss'd him with that same Complemental Form of Speech which was then in use among the Hebrews.

3. That tho' those words of the Prophet should imply a Permission, it would only relate to the Request that *Naaman* had made. The *Syrian* had only demanded of *Elisba*, whether he could not give him two Mules lading of Earth of the Holy Land; and after that, he had begg'd of God, that he would pardon him, if the King leaning upon his Hand, he should happen to prostrate himself together with him, in the Temple of *Rimmon*. *Elisba* therefore answers to the First demand, but not to the Second.

4. That tho' the Words should include the Prophets permission, we ought not to conclude from thence, that a Man may be an Idolater, and yet reserve his Heart immaculate for God. For that was not the Thing which *Naaman* desir'd of the Prophet; and tho' the Prophet had granted it, nevertheless

nevertheless we never ought to do it. Because it is certain, that God has expressly forbid Idolatry, and whatever has the least Relation to it; so that, if not only a Prophet, but all the Angels of Heaven should say the contrary, we ought to look upon 'em as *Anathema's*. All that we are to infer from thence is this, That they who serve Princes are permitted to be present at the Ceremonies of their Masters Religion, when the Duty of their Employment obliges 'em to pay 'em any Service. And this is that which *Valentinian* did, in compliance with the Emperor *Fulian*, when he enter'd into the Temple of *Fortune*; and what in the last Age the Elect. of *Saxony* did, in respect of the Emperor *Charles* the V;

I add to these Reflexions,

1. That there is some Reason to doubt, whether we may be allow'd to practise under the new Covenant, what might be tolerated, under the Old, in a poor Pagan, whose Knowledge was very small, and who had had no other Instruction, but what the Prophet had given him in his Familiar Conversation. But we may be thought to be oblig'd to greater Duties; We, that have been bred in the School of Christ, and are environ'd with such a Cloud of Witnesses, who rather chose to dye a thousand times, than to do any thing that might be ill interpreted.

2. That No Man ought to do that which *Naaman* did, in despite of his Conscience.

3. That if any one be oblig'd to do it, he ought not to give any occasion for others to believe that he approves what is done in a false Religion.

Religion. Quite the contrary, he ought to let the World see, that he detests it, and abhors the Errors, the Worship, the Mysteries and Cere-monies of it. This is that which *Valentinian* did. For *Theodoret* observes, that one day as he was attending upon *Julian* to the Temple of *Fortune*, he gave a good Cuff to the Verger that sprinkl'd the Holy Water upon all that enter'd, because he observ'd that a drop of Water had fall'n upon himself; and cry'd out aloud, that he was contaminated thereby, instead of being purify'd. Which so provoked the Emperor, that he banish'd *Valentinian*: But he remain'd not long in exile; for within a year, and some few Months afterwards, he became Master of the Empire himself.

Lastly, I conclude, that it is much the safer way to renounce all those Employments, then to engage our Selves in Actions contrary to our Belief; and that it's better to quit 'em, then to scandalize our Brethren.

In the Fourth Place, the Example of *St. Paul* is objected, who as he teaches us himself, 1 Cor. 9. 20, 21, 22, *And unto the Jews I became a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the Law, as under the Law, that I might gain them that are under the Law; To them that are without Law, as without Law (being not without Law to God, but under the Law to Christ) that I might gain them that are without the Law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all Men, that I might by all means save some.* After so fair an Example set, who is there, say they, who would scruple to conform

conform to the Times, to the Place where he lives, and the Persons with whom he converses.

I Answer, that no Body denies, but that we ought to conform to Time, to Place, and Persons ; provided we do nothing against our Conscience, and that we acquit our selves of these Duties which the True Religion exacts from us. We ought to conform with Time and Place in betaking our selves to flight, when we are persecuted ; to quit our Country, and change our Habitations, till, like *Joseph*, *Mat. 2.* we understand, that they who seek our Lives are dead. We ought to comply with persons, to avoid the exposing of Holy things to the Prophane, and giving occasion of scandal to the weak. Thus *St. Paul* became a Jew to the Jews, observing those Ceremonies among 'em, which were not contrary to the Christian Faith, by circumcising *Timothy*, and causing himself to be shaved at *Cenchreas*. He was under the Law to those that were under the Law, in abstaining from those Ceremonies that might offend the Gentiles. Lastly, he became weak to the weak, by complying with their Infirmitie. Read upon this Subject, *Rom. 14. 15.* *1 Cor. 8.* But that Holy Apostle never practis'd any base or treacherous compliances with any body, only he became all things to all Men, in things Permitted and Indifferent ; you may Judge by his manner of reproving *St. Peter*, who trode not aright, but constrain'd the Gentiles to *Judaize*. *Gal. 2. 14.* What then can our Antagonists prove from hence ? Let 'em become all things to all Men, like *St. Paul*, we will never blame 'em. But does it follow from

from thence, that we may embrace all Religions, abandon the True one, and profess a False one ? like that same *Ecebolus*, who was sometimes Orthodox, sometimes Arrian, sometimes Pagan. God preserve us from any such thoughts. Had *St. Paul* been of our *Indifferent Men's* mind, would he have undergone so many Afflictions ; expos'd himself to so many dangers ; would he have suffer'd himself to be loaded with so many Chains ; or would he have dy'd by the hand of the Common Executioner ? No, without doubt, There was nothing more easie for him then to have avoided those bitter and continual Persecutions. He need have done no more, then to have extolled *Moses* to the Jews ; *Jupiter*, *Mercury*, and the rest of their Counterfeit Deities to the Pagans ; and thus he would have pleased all. But then he would not have taught *Jesus Christ*. He preaches him up every where, tho' they threaten him with a thousand Torments, in the *Areopagus* at *Rome*, among the Jews and Gentiles ; never dissembling his Sentiments : So far from being ashamed of the Gospel of his Divine Saviour, that he Preached him both boldly and publicly, and made it his chiefest Glory so to do.

C H A P.

C H A P. XVIII.

*An Answer to some Reasons which are brought
by our Antagonists.*

OUR *Indifferent Men* make some Objections also. In the first place they put the Question, whether God cannot save People of all sorts of Religions; especially such as confess Jesus Christ, and acknowledge him to be the Son of God, the Promised *Messiah*, Crucify'd, Dead, and Risen from the Grave. This Question is Ridiculous; for the Business in Dispute is not what God can do, nor shall we undertake to set Bounds to his Infinite Mercy. But we cannot believe that he will save those that depart from a Pure Communion; who abjure his Truth; who make publick Profession of doing Things which they do not believe, and who Die unrepentant in that sad Condition. God has so clearly Explained himself in this matter, that he must willingly seek his own Destruction, that flatters himself to obtain Mercy, and follows the Footsteps of our *Indifferent Men*.

But say they in the Second Place, is it not a hard Case to be despoil'd of our Estates, to be deprived of our Honours, and Conveniencies of Life, to be Banish'd, to renounce our Pleasures, to live in a Comfortless and lonely Desert, to be confin'd to a Dark and Loathsom Dungeon, and to die cruelly by the hand of the Hangman? I grant that this is all displeasing to the Flesh. But do they not find that God sufficiently recompences

pences those who suffer for his sake? That he gives 'em his Heaven, and gave 'em himself. Whatever the Suff'rings are to which the Lord Jesus exposes his Believers and his Members, are they comparable to what he suffer'd himself to purchase our Salvation? Or is there any Proportion between them and the Recompence which the Mercy of God bestows upon us; between the Miseries of this Life, and those which we may justly be afraid of after Death; between the Blessings which it is in his Power to bereave us of, and those which he has prepared for us; between the false Pleasures which we are requir'd to renounce, and the solid Pleasures which we hope to enjoy; between the Honours and Dignities which we quit in this World, and those Eternal Glories to which we are designed? 'Tis a hard case to be persecuted, crys the Flesh; but is it not a happy thing to be favour'd of God, to be at peace in our Souls, to be assur'd of the Love of the Father of Heaven, to be Heirs of an Eternal Inheritance, to wear one day a Crown of Life, and to enjoy an endless Felicity? 'Tis a hard case to live in Adversity; but is it not infinitely more tedious for a Man to bear about him his Accuser, his Witness, his Judge, and his Executioner; to be gnaw'd by a Worm that never Dies, and to enjoy no Repose? It is a terrible Thing to be reduc'd to the Condition of *Lazarus*; but it is much more dreadful to be cast headlong into Hell with the Wicked Rich Man, while *Lazarus* is receiv'd into *Abraham's* Bosom. It is a hard Case for a Man to lay down his Life; but is it not a happiness to lose

it

it for Jesus Christ's sake, to the end we may live Eternally with him? What is it which God requires of us, which the Devil does not exact from his Slaves, tho' they never can expect other from him than Eternal Misery; and what we do not frequently do our selves upon wicked Impulses, and to satisfy our Passions? I shall not extend this Discourse any farther: I only beseech God that our *Indifferent Men* and *Libertines* may seriously reflect upon it.

C H A P. XIX.

Against those who maintain, that we ought to believe what the Magistrates will have us believe.

I Come now to those who hold, that the Sovereign Law, which is to be followed as well in Sacred, as in Civil Matters, is the Law of Magistrates, and that every Thing is to be subjected to their Commands. This was the Sentiment of an Author famous once in *England*, and who has still but too many followers. He believ'd that the Israelites were bound to receive for the Law of God, what *Abraham* delivered to 'em for the Law of God; and that the Publick Laws supply the Place of Conscience to all Men. He said moreover, explaining those words of *Matt. 10. 32. Who shall deny me before Men, &c.* That a Subject was not to be blam'd for renouncing Christ, if he were thereto constrain'd by his Prince. I compare the Author of this Opinion to that same wretched Flatterer, who
formerly

formerly proposed, in favour of his Prince, a Declaration importing, that nothing should be look'd upon as just, but what the King requir'd.

Nor much unlike to this was the Practise of those Hereticks which a certain Philosopher upbraided, that they ador'd not God, but the Imperial Pomp, changing Opinions according to the Sentiments of that Prince under whom they lived. This is an Impious Opinion, and it is very easie to shew the Falseness of it.

In a word, were there any Ground for this Opinion, there would be no longer any other Deity to be acknowledged but the Magistrate, under whom we are born Subjects, and we ought not to admit of any other Rule for the Conduct of our Lives, and our Manners, then the Laws of Princes. There would be no need of Informing our selves what God has reveal'd to Men, or what his Pleasure is ; but what the Magistrate commands us. We must expound the Scripture according to the Sentiments of the Magistrates under whom we Live, and not as it expounds it self ; as that Emperor pretended, who by an Edict ordain'd that a certain Passage of Scripture should be explain'd according to his Sense : We ought to obey 'em in despite of our Consciences and the Light of Right Reason ; and *Daniel* is extreamly to be blam'd, who refus'd to obey the Impious Edicts of the Prince under whom he lived. Who can hear such Discourses as this without trembling. Besides, is it not ridiculous to think that Men are bereft of their Reason, and the knowledge of Good and Evil, so soon as they list themselves in a Society, while that same Knowledge resides
only

only in Sovereigns ; or that we should be bound to do that, which we know to be a Sin.

But say they, does not the Scripture command us to obey the Magistrate ? 'Tis very true, nor does any Body deny it. We also farther believe, that we ought to be obedient to higher Powers, tho' they make profession of a Contrary Religion to ours ; according to the Example not only of the Apostles, but also of the Fathers of the Church, and particularly of *St. Cyprian*, who being accus'd for having conspir'd against *Cæsar*, because he was a Christian, and the Emperor was a Pagan, made Answer. *We Christians are so far from Conspiring against our Emperors, that we put up our Supplications every day for Cæsar, because he is our Prince, altho' he Worship other Deities then we do.* But if we believe that it behoves us to obey Magistrates, we add withal, that we are not bound to pay our Obedience to 'em, but in things which are not contrary to the word of God. We believe that we ought to give to *Cæsar* that which is *Cæsars*, but withal, that we ought to give to God that which is God's, as *Jesus Christ* instructs us. When the Law of the Prince agrees with the Law of God, then we obey him without Scruple ; but when the Princes Law does not correspond with the Law of God, we make no difficulty to assert, that it is a piece of Impiety to obey that Law, because it is better to obey God then Man, as the Apostle enjoins us. What greater Affront can be put upon God, then to obey Men rather then Him, to observe Human Laws, and violate Divine Commands. He is the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords ;

Lords ; When he opens his Mouth, he alone ought to be hearkned to, and we ought not then to heed what Men ordain, when it is contrary to the Command of our Great Master. The Companions of *Daniel* were highly commended for refusing to prostrate themselves before the Statue of *Nebuchadnezzar*, though that haughty Prince had ordained it under severe Penalties ; but the Israelites are blamed for having followed *Jeroboam*, and for having abandoned the Temple of the True God. This Doctrine has been almost Universally received by all Christians, and I could cite upon this Subject *Tertullian*, *St. Ambrose*, *St. Chrysostome*, *St. Austin*, &c. The Popes Decretals are in Express Terms. *If the Lord Commands Things which are not Contrary to the Scripture, let the Servant be subject to his Lord ; but if he Commands things contrary, let him obey the Lord of the Soul, not the Lord of the Body. If the Emperor commands what is good, execute the Command, if it be Evil, Answer, God is to be obey'd before Man.* This is that which was practised by the *Thebean* Legion ; if it be true, at least what some Authors have written, all the Soldiers of that Legion were Christians. Now after they had pass'd the *Alps*, and were approaching near *Maximian's* Army, they Understood, that the Emperor, according to Custom, was resolved to make all his Soldiers swear Allegiance to him, upon an Altar Consecrated to a Counterfeit Deity, and that they were to take an Oath contrary to the Impulses of their Conscience ; which having obliged 'em to draw off in a Body from the rest of the Camp, *Maximian* sent

sent his Commands to 'em to come away and sacrifice to the Gods; to which *Mauricius*, Chief of the Legion, *Exuperus* and *Candidus*, answered, in the name of all the rest, That they were all ready to fight against the Enemies of the Empire, but that they would never sacrifice to false Gods, nor act against their Brethren. *Maximian*, incens'd at this Answer, caus'd the whole Legion to be twice decimated, and every Tenth Man to be put to death; but seeing that would do no good, but that the Soldiers still continued stedfast in their Profession of the Truth, he sent the whole Army against that single Legion, which surrounding 'em on every side, put 'em all to the Sword; And thus, with their Blood, they seal'd to that Truth, That loss of Life is to be preferr'd a thousand times before acting contrary to the Light of a Man's Conscience.

But in regard the Truth of this History is call'd in question, I shall produce another which is beyond all contradiction; which is the Story of *Julian's* Soldiers. That Emperor had surpriz'd 'em by ordaining that they should strow some grains of Incense, before they received the Largesse, which he was about to bestow upon 'em. Some of 'em being inform'd of the Fraud, the rest did innocently what was requir'd from 'em, but being told of the fault which they had committed, they were not contented to come and cry out in the publick Market-place, *We are Christians, Jesus Christ our Lord, we have not renounced thee. If our Hand has committed a Crime, our Will has not consented*; But they came to the Emperor, and with exalted Voices, *Reserve*, said they, *our Gifts*
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for the Soldiers ; Sacrifice us to Jesus Christ who is our Monarch ; Burn us in the Place where we have strew'd the Incense ; Cut off our hands that have committed so great a Crime, as to stretch themselves out upon your Altars. Distribute your Gold to those who are not sorry for having received it : Jesus Christ is sufficient for us, and supplies all our wants. After this, they patiently and joyfully suffered death, every one of them, except one who was pardon'd by the Emperor, but who was very sorry that he had not the Honour to abrogate his Crime by the same Martyrdom which his Companions had undergone.

But say they, Does not *St. Paul* Teach us, that we ought to submit our selves to Princes, not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience sake. 'Tis very true ; but it does not follow from thence, that Princes or Magistrates have any right over the Conscience, or that they have any Power to make us believe what they please. No Body has any Right over the Conscience, but only he that infused it into Men. This is that which has been acknowledg'd in all Ages. I could easily prove it, would I but collect together, what has been written upon this Subject. I could cite the Fathers of the Church, *Tertullian*, *Lactantius*, *St. Hilarie*, and *St. Athanasius*. I could also cite several Councils, as the Fourth Council of Toledo, in the year 633. wherein there past a Decree in these words. As for the Jews, The Synod has ordain'd that from henceforth, that no body shall be forc'd to believe. For God has compassion upon whom he will have mercy, and hardens whom he pleases ; and People are not to be sav'd by force, but willingly ;

for the better observance of the outward form of Justice, For as Man lost himself by obeying the Serpent willingly, so is he also Sav'd by believing, and turning to God, when he calls him by his Grace. Let Persuasion therefore be made use of, and not violence, to incline 'em to turn freely, and without any constraint. And the Arch-Bishop of Seville loudly condemns that Prince, who had constrain'd by his Power, those that ought to have been converted by Reason. To which may be added that same Law, of which, mention is made in the *African Codex* of Monsieur Justel, by which every one is left at his liberty, whether he will embrace the Christian Religion, or not. I could also quote several Emperors. For example, The Emperor *Constantine*, who had desir'd that all his Subjects might be Christians, without constraining any body. The Emperor *Jovian*, who is applauded, for that he gave every body leave to profess what Religion he pleas'd. The Emperor *Valentinian*, who set forth Laws, by which he gave Liberty to every body to profess the Religion wherein he was bred. The Emperor *Marcian*, who in the Letter which he wrote to the *Archimandrites*, and the Monks of *Jerusalem*, *We will not hale, says he, or drag any Person, whoever he be, into the way of Truth, either by Threats, or by Violence:* and the Emperor *Constantin Pogonatus*, who in his Letter to the Bishop of *Rome*, upon occasion of the Sixth Universal Council, which he call'd at *Constantinople*, expressly says, *We could invite and exhort all the World, to amend themselves, and unite with the Christians, but we will constrain no body.* 'Tis true, that *Charlemagne* us'd violence towards

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the Saxons ; but his Conduct is blam'd be *Alewin* his Tutor ; as was also that of King *Chilperic*, by *Gregory* the First ; and that of King *Sisebut* in *Spain*, by the Council of *Toledo*. Lastly, I could cite the Pagans themselves, who have been of the same Opinion, That no body has Right over the Conscience, and that the Will is not to be forc'd, as appears by what was written by an *Indian* Philosopher to *Alexander*. *Thy Friends advise thee to offer violence to the Indian Philosophers : Thou mayst remove their Bodies from one Place to another, but thou canst never force their Minds, &c. There is no Prince or King that can make us do any thing against our Will.* This is a most certain Truth, and they who are of another Opinion, talk against the Light of their Understandings. Thus *M. Le Bret*, Counsellor of State, in his Treatise of the King's Sovereignty, discussing the Question, Whether it be Lawful sometimes to disobey the King ? Answers, That in matters of Religion there is no wavering to be admitted, between the Fear of God and Man. And he also maintains, That in austere and harsh Proceedings, the Minister of the Prince's Cruelties participates of his Crime ; and that a Judge who pronounces an unjust Sentence, resolving upon Injustice, and condemns the Innocent upon privy Signet Letters, transgresses in his Obedience ; because that being a Messenger of Justice, he never ought to abuse it, to colour over the Fury and Iniquity of a Prince, who borrows the Formalities of it. What think ye, was the meaning of *St. Paul*, when he teaches us that we ought to submit to Princes, not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience sake ? No

other, without question, but that we ought to submit to the Higher Powers, in things which are not forbid by the Law of God, not only for Wrath, that is to say, because there is no resisting 'em without punishment, and without incurring their Indignation, but also for Conscience sake ; that is, because the word of God binds our Consciences to it. For if we allow any greater Latitude to the words, it must be said, that *St. Paul* meant, that we should sacrifice to false Gods, if we liv'd under a Prince that should command it. Which is that which no Man dares presume to say ; Since no Man can be ignorant of the Opinion of that faithful Servant of God in this particular. We say no more of it here, because we have already spoken concerning it.

C H A P. XX.

Against those who believe it sufficient to live, according to the Rules of Moral Honesty.

THere are many People who believe it to be sufficient to live well, but that 'twas no great matter what they believ'd: that it was enough to reform their Manners, but that there was no necessity of tormenting a Man's self about his Belief, and that he may be Sav'd in all Sects, provided he abstains from those Vices which the Law of God and right Reason condemn. But they who are of this Opinion, are grossly mistaken; nor will it be a difficult thing to evince 'em.

First, if it be sufficient to lead an Innocent Life, without ever troubling our selves what we ought

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to believe, 'tis a wonderful thing that Faith should be so often recommended to us, and that the Holy Men of God should declare, that without it there is no Salvation. *Amend your Lives,* says Christ, but at the same time, *believe in the Gospel.* If thou believ'st, said Philip to the Eunuch, and he Answer'd, *I believe that Jesus is the Son of God.* If thou confests with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God has rais'd him from the dead, thou shalt be sav'd. But without Faith it is impossible to please him. Heb. 11. 6. *He that believeth in him is not condemn'd; but he that believeth not is already condemn'd; because he has not believ'd in the name of the only begotten of God.* And this Faith is distinguish'd from good Works, as you may find in the Epistles to the Romans, the Galatians, and in other Places. I confess, that Faith alone without Charity, is not sufficient to Save. *Thô I should speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels, if I have not Charity, I am become as sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal.* And *thô I have the Gift of Prophecy, and Understand all Mysteries and all Knowledge, and thô I have all Faith, that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing,* 1 Cor. 13. I confess also, that without Sanctification we cannot see God. Heb. 12. But I averr, in the First place, that there is no Sanctification, where there is no Faith. 'Tis Faith that purifies the Heart. Secondly, That Faith ought to have Charity for its foundation, it ought to proceed; saith St. Paul, 1 Tim. 1. 5. *From a good Conscience, a pure Heart, and a Faith unfeigned.* Faith is dead without Charity; but there is no true Charity without Faith.

H. If it be sufficient to live morally well, I cannot conceive wherefore *St. John* 1 Epist. cap. 4. would have us try the Spirits with so much care, to avoid the receiving all Doctrines that are Taught us, *Beloved*, says He, *Believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God.* And for fear lest Men should think that examination of the Spirits was recommended to 'em, only to try whether they taught a strict or loose Morality; the Apostle adds, *That every Spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God; but this is that Spirit of Antichrist, &c.* If no Man then can be of God, unless he confess Christ come in the flesh, certainly it cannot be sufficient to live morally well, to be sav'd; unless Men think they can obtain Salvation without being of God. Moreover, whence comes it that the same Apostle in his Second Epistle, forbids the Faithful to receive into their Houses, or to bid good speed to those that bring not the Doctrine of Christ; for it appears that he speaks of the same *Seducers*, who confess'd not that Jesus Christ was come in the Flesh. Wherefore is it that he would have us stand so strictly upon our Guards, when the business in Dispute is about the receiving a Doctrine, or not receiving it, if it were sufficient for a Man to correct his Manners to be Sav'd.

III. I draw a Third Argument from hence, that the Doctor of the Gentiles thunders out Anathema's against those that press the observation of the Mosaic Ceremonies, tho' they carefully enjoin'd the practise of the Moral Law. If it were sufficient to observe the Decalogue, would Christian Charity have allow'd *St. Paul* to Anathematize

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rize People who believ'd in Christ, only that they were *zealous of the Law*. Acts 21. 20. and who were only for joyning *Moses to Jesus Christ*, the Ceremonies of the one, to the Gospel of the other.

IV. If this Opinion which we oppose were true, whence comes it that the Scripture condemns the Unbelievers to Eternal Pains, *Apoc.* 21. 8. and that it excludes Idolaters out of the Kingdom of Heaven, *1 Cor.* 6. 10. There can be no other Reason given, but only because that living Morally well, is not sufficient for the obtaining of Eternal Salvation; but that it behoves us to believe those Truths which are Taught us.

Fifthly, If Living according to the Rules of Moral Honesty, were sufficient to bring a Man to Heaven, I would fain know the Reason why the Apostles take so much pains to instruct People in the Truths of the Gospel; why do they keep such a stir to prove that Christ is the Promised *Messiah*, that they speak of his Divinity and his Cross, two things that equally stumbled both the Jews, and the Gentiles? Had it not been sufficient to have taught 'em Good Morality?

Sixthly, Whence comes it to pass, that Christ and his Apostles so frequently exhort us to suffer for the Truth; and that so many persons have suffered Martyrdom in Defence of the Truth, of which they might have been ignorant, if we may believe our Antagonists, without being deprived of Salvation. There would have been but very few Confessors and Martyrs, had Moral Honesty been sufficient to bring us to Eternal Felicity.

To all these Proofs I add this Important Reflexion, that we draw from the Truths of the

Gospel, which are propos'd to us to the end we should believe 'em, the most powerful Motives that are able to engage us to Holiness. There is nothing more prevalent to incline Men to Sanctification, then to make known to 'em a God that loves Men, to that Degree, as to give 'em his only begotten Son: a God that abhors and detests Sin to that degree that he rather chose to expose to Death his only Son in whom he is well pleased, then to leave Sin Unpunished. A God that takes upon him Human Nature, and under that Nature, suffers a most Cruel Death to make an Atonement for the Sin of Men, and to satisfy Divine Vengeance, justly provoked against 'em.

Lastly, A God that penetrates into the most secret Folds and Concealments of the Heart, who is to raise the Dead, and bring 'em to appear before his Throne, to give an Account of all their Actions. It behoves us therefore to believe, if we will live well; and to believe and live well, if we intend to be Sav'd.

C H A P. XXL

*That the Opinion of Indifferency in Religions
has displeased almost all People.*

THERE remains nothing more for me, but only to Answer an Argument which is attributed to the King of Siam, and which we have cited already in the Third Chapter: "The True God, said he, who Created the Heaven and the Earth, and all the Creatures therein contained, and who has given 'em Natures and

" Inclina-

" Inclinations so different, had he so pleased, by
 " giving Bodies and Souls alike to Men, could
 " have inspir'd into 'em the same Sentiments, as
 " to what Religion it behov'd 'em to follow ; and
 " have caused all Nations to agree and unite
 " under one and the same Law. But it seems
 " that Providence permits diversity of Sects, be-
 " cause God takes as much delight to be ho-
 " noured with different sorts of Worship, and
 " various Ceremonies, as to be glorify'd by a
 " Prodigious Number of Creatures, the variety
 " of whose Beauty's set forth and Magnifies his
 " Infinite Power.

There are some People who suffer themselves
 to be dazzled with this Argument ; but I beseech
 'em to consider, that it may be prov'd as well,
 that God takes pleasure in the Sins which Men
 Commit. For it might be said, that had God so
 pleased, by giving to Men Bodies and Souls alike,
 he might have infused into 'em the same Senti-
 ments for Virtue ; but that it seems as if he
 permitted the one to be Wise and Virtuous, the
 other to be very Vicious, because he takes delight
 in the variety of Humours and Inclinations.
 Now I am apt to believe there are very few
 that would approve such a Method of Arguing:

To this first Answer I may add two more.
 The first is, That there might be something
 Plausible in this first Argument of the King of
Siam, if God had not really made known to
 Men what it was that he requir'd 'em to believe,
 and what they were to do. But we have proved
 that he has reveal'd it to 'em, and that they need
 no more then read the Scripture with attention,
 and without prejudice, to understand which is
 the True Religion.

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The Second Answer is, That this Argument is grounded upon a false Principle, that God might have inspired into all Men the same Sentiments of Religion, had he not taken delight in Variety. For God is not bound to make himself known alike to all Men. He is absolutely at his own Liberty in all his Works. They to whom he has reveal'd himself have no more cause to magnifie themselves then others; and they from whom he conceals himself, have no cause to complain.

Moreover, it is not to be imagined from the Opinion which the King of *Siam* seems to have concerning Indifferency in Religions, that this Sentiment derives it self naturally into the Thoughts of all Men. On the other side, it would be easie to prove, that the greatest part of Religions have condemned it.

The thing is clear in respect of the Christian Religion, nor is there any need of bringing farther Proofs. The Pagans were so fixed to their Old Opinions, that one of the most Learned Interpreters of *Virgil* observes, that great Care was taken both among the Athenians and the Romans, that no body introduced New Religions. For that Reason it was, that *Socrates* was condemned at *Athens*, that the Jews were expell'd *Rome*, and that the Books of *Numa* were burnt. *Josephus* reports, that the Athenians inflicted grievous punishments upon those that introduc'd new Deities, and durst presume so much as to speak against their Law. *Dionysius* of *Halicarnassus* asserts, that not only the Greeks, but also the Barbarians carefully preserv'd the Religion of their Ancestors; and the same thing is reported of the Scythians and Persians. Nevertheless we

will

will not deny, what *Socrates* said, that it was lawful for every Body to serve the Deity, according to the Custom of the Country, and that Foreign Gods were often transported to *Rome* and *Athens*. But give us leave to make these Three Remarks. 1. That the Testimony of *Socrates* is of no Weight, because he was Condemned at *Athens*. 2. That the greatest Part of those Deities which were transported to *Rome*, were remov'd out of the Cities which the Romans had Besieg'd, and were by the Priest Invited, before the whole Army, to the Capital of all *Italy*, where they should have, as they said, more Temples, more Sacrifices, and more Adorers. To which we may add, that they were therefore removed, because it was an Opinion among 'em, that all Places had their Tutelar Deities, and that they could not take Cities, till after they had removed the Gods that protected 'em. 3. That those Gods which were carried to *Rome*, *Athens*, and other Places, and those that were there Worshiped under the Character of unknown Gods, are sufficient proofs, that some Accident fell out, of which they believed some Deity, that was unknown to 'em, to be the Author; and make it appear, that the Romans were of Opinion, that the more Gods they had in their Cities, the more Protectors they had. But from thence it does not follow that the *Athenians* and *Romans* believ'd, that all Religions were Indifferent: For had they so thought, why did they persecute so Cruelly the Christians and the Jews. It is certain also, that they derided those New Gods that were introduced, as appears by the Comedies of *Aristophanes*. To which I may add, that

that the *Branniry* among the Indians, who are the Ancient *Brachmans*, believe that every Body may be saved in his own Religion, provided he follow exactly the way that God has shewed him; but that he shall be Damn'd, if he pursues any other.

As for the *Mahometans*, 'tis very true, that *Mahomet* seems to favour Indifferency in Religions, while he says in his *Alcoran*, that every Man who lives well, who Worships the true God, and does good Works, whether Christian or Jew, obtains the Favour of his God. Nevertheless, 'tis certain, that in another place he asserts, that the Law is the only way of Salvation, and ordains his Religion to be established in the World by force of Arms. Indeed it would be a kind of Wonder, that the Mahometans should think, that the Christians could be Saved, seeing that the Christians aver *Mahomet* to be an Impostor, and daily beg of God, that that same false Prophet may have no more followers, but that his Religion may be rooted from the Earth. Moreover, 'tis well known, that the Turks openly condemn the Persians. Which they would never do, if they thought all Religions were Indifferent.

As for the Jews, the Thing is so certain, that he who questions it, must never have read their Writings: For they continually curse the Christians, and are so obstinately persuaded of the Truth of their Religion, nay more, That it is the only True Religion in the World, that there have been several who have rather chosen to die, then Violate the meanest precept of their Law.

THE END.